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(HANSARD)

Thursday, September 27, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 27, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled "Financial Sustainability Report 2018".

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[*English*]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada on the application of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and the Privacy Act for the year 2017-18.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you were to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

> That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for Saskatoon West, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, October 2, 2018, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

PENSIONS

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who are concerned about the future of their pensions and particularly related to Bill C-27, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

Security in one's retirement is really important to all Canadians, certainly important to the people of Kootenay—Columbia. Basically, they are asking that the government withdraw Bill C-27.

● (1005)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to present a petition from Canadian youth. These young Canadians ask the House of Commons to give serious consideration to the facts relating to the climate crisis, that Canada has endorsed the Paris Agreement but does not yet have a target consistent with it.

These youth petitioners and those who care deeply about youth, call the House of Commons to develop urgently a meaningful plan for a response to the climate crisis. They provide further details within the petition.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Tamil Canadians and their allies in solidarity with the courageous efforts of protesting Tamil families of the disappeared from the north and east of the island. Beginning in February 2017, Tamil families of the disappeared have protested continuously across the north and east for over 500 days.

The petitioners are seeking the release of the list of surrenderees from the end of the armed conflict, the release of the list of all the past and present secret detention centres held in Sri Lanka and the release of a list of those held under the draconian prevention of terrorism act.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP) moved:

That, given that a housing crisis is raging in Canada and that 90% of the funding for the government's national housing strategy will only flow after the next election, and that much of the funding depends on collaboration with provincial governments and the private sector, the House call on the government to: (a) recognize the right to housing as a human right; and (b) bring forward 50% of the strategy's funding before the next election to invest in (i) housing for Indigenous communities, (ii) the construction of new affordable housing, new social housing units and new co-ops units, (iii) a plan to end homelessness, (iv) the renovation of existing social housing and old housing stock, (v) the expansion of rent supplements, (vi) the administration of programs that meet the special needs of seniors and persons with reduced mobility.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hochelaga.

A safe and affordable place to call home is not a reality for many living in my riding. As we head into the final year of the government's mandate, I had hoped we would see something different for the people I represent.

Rents have doubled in the last 10 years in Saskatchewan without a similar rise in wages or income supports for people living with disabilities, single parents and seniors. Currently, in Saskatchewan, we have the highest unemployment rate outside of the Atlantic provinces. Life is very tough for far too many people in Saskatchewan.

Invariably, when I am out and about attending events and meeting with constituents, the conversation turns to housing and people struggling to find a safe, affordable place to call home. This summer, the situation for many has become even worse. Why? Because shortly after the Saskatchewan government signed on to the principles of the new provincial-territorial framework with the federal government on housing, our provincial government cut the provincial rental supplement. As of July 1, this important support for people in my province, in my riding, was ended.

What does that mean? For Amanda, a single mother in Saskatoon with three young children, who lost her job last fall, it means living in fear of also losing her home. Amanda is receiving income support from the provincial government through its transitional employment allowance, which includes a rental supplement. Her $1,000-a-month transitional allowance, plus her rental supplement of $331, means that 65% of her income goes to her monthly rent. That means she has $481 left for groceries, utilities and clothes. It means living every day with the anxiety and stress that she will lose her rental supplement and, if that happens, what will happen.

Over 14,000 people in Saskatchewan depend on the rental supplement to afford a place to live. The Saskatoon action plan on homelessness, a community-based leadership group, has helped find safe, affordable housing for over 800 people in Saskatoon, and the vast majority of the people who were helped counted on that rental supplement.

This reality is not unique to my community, my city and my province, it is a reality for far too many people across the country. At least 235,000 households in Canada experience homelessness in any given year. Over a million households pay over 30% of their income for rent, and 400,000 of those people pay over 50% of their income for rent. I consider that a crisis, and I am not alone. It is the general consensus that as a country we must tackle this crisis now.

In 2016, the mayors of Canada's largest cities estimated there were more than 170,000 people waiting for subsidized housing. Many people on those waiting lists will become homeless while they are waiting. One in 15 aboriginal people in urban centres is homeless. Occupancy rates for emergency shelters are 90%, up 10% over the last while. Of that group that are using shelters, more are families with children. They are the fastest-growing percentage of those accessing shelters.

Today's motion is about getting the government to step up sooner rather than later, to match government action to the urgency of the issue, and to match government action and timelines to the reality too many Canadians are living with: no place to call home.

A national organization I found said it best when describing where we find ourselves: high stakes with clear choices. That seems to sum it up. I do not agree with the federal government's current choices. The largest percentage of the federal government investment comes after the next election. New investments are minimal. We have had a lot of fanfare, rejigging of programs and underwhelming targets set. I do not see a government standing up and leading the way forward.

Today's motion is about putting on the table the path forward for the government and our country to truly tackle the housing and homelessness crisis.

I would also like to make note that the only time we parliamentarians, as the House of Commons, have debated this crisis is when my NDP colleagues and I have tabled bills and motions.

● (1010)

I have said in the House on a number of occasions that this debate must happen in order to hold the government to account and turn its great words and strategies into action. As the mandate of the government progresses, as the fanfare around the national housing strategy fades, we see the government stepping back from the leadership and investment needed to meet the crisis we are in.

One of the key pillars from the national housing strategy is that the strategy "will first focus on the most vulnerable Canadians. This includes women and children fleeing family violence, seniors, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans and young adults."

I agree, but I do not see this priority in action or prioritized in the investments to date by the government. If this in fact were true, why is the Canada housing benefit not being launched until 2020-21, after the next federal election?

The Canada housing benefit is the transformative change we need to immediately deal with a lack of affordable housing in Canada. This pillar of the strategy must happen sooner rather than later. The Canada social housing benefit could transform lives immediately. Bringing forward the planned investment in the Canada housing benefit to next year's budget could mean over 250,000 low-income households in Canada would be able to afford their rent. This is just one example, one initiative which if brought forward would actually make people's lives better.

The federal government can afford to do more and it must do more. It has been over 30 years since the federal government really took a leadership role in housing in this country, and this backing out of a commitment to an investment in affordable housing has given rise to the crisis we are in today. It is a big part of it.

One aspect of this off-loading has been the rise in the capital repair deficit for social housing, which now stands in excess of $1.3 billion. The government has extended the operating agreements which were due to expire. This was an important first step, but it is only a stop-gap measure for now. Those who provide housing to the most vulnerable, who must provide deep subsidies so rent remains affordable, are in immediate need of support for capital repairs. The government must inject immediate investment so that we hang on to these very important social assets in our communities.

A specific strategy for indigenous peoples, those living in remote, rural and northern communities and for those living in urban centres has yet to materialize. It had a mention in the national housing strategy, but we have yet to see real progress and a concerted effort by the government despite stating it was a priority for the national housing strategy.

Frances Sanderson and Mark Maracle, the co-chairs of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's Urban Aboriginal Housing Advisory Committee, stated, "If the government fails to step up with continued funding, we will, sadly, see a rise in the already devastating aboriginal homeless population."

The government is more than well aware of the housing crisis on first nations. Some 40% of homes on first nations are in need of major repairs and 35% are not suitable for the family's size. So far, the government has only invested in 3% of the funding that is actually needed to improve the situation. I am afraid that the so-called innovation contest announced this summer for housing ideas on first nations is insulting.

Budgets are about priorities, and we have to see a budget by the government that tells Canadians the housing and homeless crisis is as important as the government keeps telling us it is. People like Amanda and the 14,000 people in Saskatchewan who are finding out that they cannot count on their provincial government are counting on the federal Liberal government to step up now.

While building more affordable rental housing is critical, we cannot in the immediate term build our way out of the affordability crisis renters face today. The government must move up its investment in the Canada housing benefit. That is the action and the leadership we must see.

I wish to end my comments on the government's commitment to legislate a right to housing with what the Prime Minister stated over a year ago, "Housing rights are human rights." However, we have seen what appears to be a stepping back by the government on legislating a right to housing.

● (1015)

We have heard that the government's own consultations gave rise to a consensus that legislation be enacted to exclusively recognize the right to housing. I ask the government to follow through on this publicly stated commitment that will allow citizens to hold their government to account to what is and must be a basic human right, the right to a safe and affordable place to call home.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing this motion forward. It is never a bad day in the House of Commons when we are talking about housing, the housing needs of Canadians, and in particular, the issue that she has raised around indigenous housing both on and off reserve, in cities and in rural and remote areas.

I also would like to thank the member opposite for a sustained focus on the need to do better and the need to accelerate. We all share those goals. We all share the commitment to reverse 25 years of federal absence on this policy.

There were attempts to get back into the federal housing field. There was a budget that clearly put the homeless partnership strategy in place. Former minister Claudette Bradshaw was one of the heroes of the housing activists across this country when she brought the federal government back to that file.

I also would remind the member opposite that a national accord was signed in 2004 under former minister Joe Fontana which set 10 years of funding, until the last government let that wind down and put thousands of Canadians at risk.

The member has said she wants to bring money forward. Every housing expert we have talked to in this country has said a housing program should be built progressively year after year. If a program is front-end loaded, inflation and need and sustained subsidies disappear in the back-end and people are de-housed with a policy that is designed that way. Not a single expert in the country has advised us to front-end load a program.

Why do members of the NDP think front-end loading the program would be the right way to go when no expert would agree with them?

● (1020)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I want to echo that the federal government did step out of housing 30 years ago and there have been steps taken into it, particularly Claudette Bradshaw's leadership around the homelessness partnering strategy. That is a piece which the Liberal government has continued to work on and add funds to.

I do not agree with the member that every single expert in the country does not agree that the Canada housing benefit is something we could bring forward sooner. It would immediately help people while we do the other hard work to build more affordable housing.

I hear what the member has to say but I do not agree with the assessment that every expert feels that what the government is doing is the right way to go.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for working so hard on this file.

One thing that the member did mention was the challenge put out for ideas on indigenous housing. She kind of scuffed it off.

Since the Liberal government took power in 2015, it has talked about reconciliation all the time. Could the member share with me what she has seen in the last three years that has actually impacted indigenous housing in a positive way or is it all a facade, as I see it?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the action meet the rhetoric when it comes to housing, particularly housing on first nations.

When minimal investment is made that would not even get anywhere near to solving the problem, when a contest is held as a way to make it look like something is being done around housing, that does not reflect an attitude toward reconciliation that I would support.

The government has made attempts but it has not gone far enough. It needs to raise it up quite a bit to fit the rhetoric that we are hearing in our communities that this relationship is the one that is the most important to the government.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to join other members here in thanking the hon. member for bringing forward an opposition supply day motion which allows us to talk about housing. I agree with the hon. parliamentary secretary that it is never a bad day when we do that.

I share the sense that we could be doing more sooner, but I also hear the hon. parliamentary secretary that front-end loading may not be the right way.

I wonder if the hon. member for Saskatoon West could share with us the balance that we need to get to put more housing in place sooner without falling into the worrying trap put forward by the parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, when it came to the national housing strategy, I agreed with the steps taken in the crisis and being able to help those who were most vulnerable. I mentioned those folks in my speech. I felt the way we could do that was to help the most vulnerable, the people who are homeless now or on the verge of not having a home, like Amanda, who I spoke about in my speech.

The Canada housing benefit was a way to step in immediately. It told provinces and people in my community that the federal government understood the crisis and it was there to help them immediately. The best way is to step in right away.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to rise to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from Saskatoon West that we are debating here today.

When I was named the housing critic for the NDP, a role I performed for several years, I launched a campaign called A Roof, A Right, which took me all across Canada. The title was carefully chosen; words matter. There is no doubt in my mind that housing is a fundamental right and should be treated as such.

In 1976, Canada ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or ICESCR, which obliges nations to recognize housing as a right.

The problem is that, under Canadian law, for an international treaty to be justiciable and actually enforceable in Canada, we have to pass legislation here in the House.

Here we are more than 40 years later, and unfortunately there is no Canadian legislation that formally recognizes every individual's right to housing.

In order to meet its international obligations, the federal government has a responsibility not only to incorporate the right to housing into the Canadian Human Rights Act, but also to implement the necessary measures to ensure that the fundamental right to housing is fully realized.

The current housing situation in Canada clearly shows that since the ICESCR was ratified, successive governments never took the steps required to eliminate the obstacles preventing the full implementation of that basic right.

We have been hearing for years about the housing crisis in Canada. Rising rents, a shortage of rental housing units, the lack of federal government funding for social housing, too many families spending over 30% of their income on housing and increasing homelessness are only a few examples of the causes and consequences of that crisis.

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, housing is considered affordable if it represents 30% or less of a household's income. Households that spend more on housing are considered to be in core housing need.

According to the 2016 National Household Survey, 24% of households spend more than 30% of their total income on housing costs. That is one in four Canadian households. Of Canadian households that are renters 40% spend over 30% of their income on rent.

This means that households in core housing need are too often forced to choose which basic needs they will meet.

In a wealthy country like ours, no one should have to choose between buying groceries and paying rent.

The purpose of this motion is to correct this situation and to obtain strong support from the House to ensure that the government meets its international commitments.

A few months ago, the government announced its national housing strategy with great fanfare. The fundamental problem with the strategy is that, as usual, the Liberals are not following through on their promises. I am not casting doubt on the housing minister's goodwill, but he probably needs to talk to the Minister of Finance. When the Minister of Finance announced the funding that would be invested in social infrastructure, including housing, he postponed 90% of those investments until the final year of this government's term.

Despite the urgent and long-standing need for housing, the government thinks it is a good idea to withhold 90% of the money that is supposed to go towards improving living conditions for Canadian families and maybe starting to meet our international commitments. Why is the government withholding this money? Is it so it can be offered up in 2019 as a kind of pre-election treat? That is simply shameful.

That is not all. The vast majority of the funding announced largely depends on increased collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners. Funding that would come from the provinces and the private sector was even included in the national housing strategy, but without their consent.

How long will it take for families affected by the housing crisis to finally see any of this money?

With this motion, we are calling on the government to bring forward 50% of the federal funding allocated to the national housing strategy before the next election and to invest that money in the following: housing for indigenous communities; the construction of new affordable housing, new social housing units and new co-op units; a plan to end homelessness; the renovation of existing social housing and old housing stock; the expansion of rent supplements; and the administration of programs that meet the special needs of seniors and persons with reduced mobility.

● (1025)

I will now elaborate on a few of these calls for action. The housing situation in indigenous communities could not be more dire, and federal authorities, which have full authority in this area and fiduciary obligations towards indigenous peoples, are aware of this.

I am not making it up when I say that the federal authorities are aware of the situation. As proof, I offer the response to a request for information submitted to the government by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay about the infrastructure needs of first nations. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada had this to say about housing conditions:

> According to a needs assessment study based on the National Household Survey 2006, the housing shortage on reserve is expected to rise to approximately 115,000 units by 2031. Data from the 2009-2011 National Assessment of First Nations Water and Wastewater Systems indicates that 20,000 units need to be built on reserve in order to reduce the average number of persons by household to four people per home (on-reserve average), and 81,000 houses are needed to reduce it to the 2.5 Canadian average. Moreover, as of 2011, almost 41% of households on reserve are dwellings in need of major repair and mould or mildew has been reported in 51% of units.

That is what the government said.

Although departmental officials were aware of this situation, the government decided to fund the construction of only 300 new housing units per year in 2016 and 2017, which is only 3% of what is necessary. Moreover, if we take into consideration the fact that the housing shortage will rise to over 115,000 units over the next 15 years, it becomes very clear that the government will have to do a lot more to meet housing needs in indigenous communities and ensure that they too have the right to housing.

We are also calling on the government to invest in the construction of new affordable housing, social housing and co-operative housing units, as well as in the renovation of existing social housing and old housing stock. This is probably not the first time that members have heard me talk about this, because it has been my pet issue for a number of years now. However, it seems I need to repeat myself.

Until the federal government withdrew from the social housing sector in 1994, nearly 650,000 social housing units were built in Canada under long-term agreements with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Those agreements, effective for 25 to 50 years, made it possible for social housing providers to give rent subsidies so that tenants did not have to spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Hundreds of these agreements have gradually been expiring over the past decade or so. From 2006 to 2013, over 45,000 social housing units were affected by the expiry of agreements, and that has had an obvious impact on poorer families. Just last year, the number of households affected climbed to 140,000.

Despite all that, the government is still making us wait before it reinvests in social housing. We do have to give the current government some credit for allocating temporary amounts to address the expiry of agreements, but what about the penny-pinching that has been going on since 2006?

In the meantime, Carole Parent, who has been living in a co-op in my riding of Hochelaga for 25 years, used to pay $175 a month for housing, which was about 25% of her income. Her co-op's long-term operating agreement expired a few years ago, and as a result, her rent jumped to $306 a month, which is an increase of nearly 75%. This is certainly less than what each member of this House pays for housing, but Ms. Parent has severe employment constraints. She cannot work and lives on social solidarity benefits.

There is an election campaign going on in Quebec, and some people have claimed that a family could buy groceries for $75 a week. After Ms. Parent pays her rent and bills, she does not even have $75 a month left for groceries.

She is not the only one in this situation, and it is only getting worse. I could have given a 20-minute speech, and I still would not have had enough time to say everything I wanted to say.

I will end on that note. Like many speakers today, I was happy that the government was willing to implement a housing strategy, but reality quickly set in. The government must put its money where its mouth is and take action now. I hope it will finally listen to reason and vote in favour of this motion.

● (1030)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Hochelaga for all the work she has been doing for many years now to convince the Canadian government to resume an active role in housing, not just as a leader, but as a partner. I would like to personally congratulate her and encourage her to work even harder to ensure that the Canadian government's renewed involvement will have as big an impact as possible for Canadian families in the decade to come.

Is she aware that approximately one-third of the more than $40 billion in national housing strategy funding will have been invested between 2015 and 2019 and that the remaining two-thirds will be invested over the next eight years?

● (1035)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's work and his kind words. I like working with him, and I know he listens to me when I go see him. I thank him for that.

However, I do not agree with everything he said. Take that $40 billion, for example. It is somewhat inflated.

The Minister of Finance tabled a budget, and that budget included a housing component, but it was actually for $11 billion over 11 years. A big chunk of that $40 billion will come from the provinces and other stakeholders, including some in the private sector.

What happens to the federal funding if a province cannot or will not spend money on housing? What happens to the federal funding in such cases? It just sits there and does not help anyone.

The first thing I want to point out is that it is not $40 billion; it is much less than that. That figure is overstated because it includes contributions from other partners. The second thing is that a big chunk of that budget is going to be spent during an election year, 2019, and half of the budget will not be released until after yet another election.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of working with housing groups in the Waterloo region who are working hard to provide adequate housing and affordable housing for people. I had the privilege of serving on a committee with them. I certainly applaud the efforts of all these groups.

However, we are missing one big piece of the puzzle in today's motion. My colleagues are saying that people are losing jobs, and I agree with that. We need to look at what is causing this increased housing crisis. Why are people losing jobs? It is largely because of the mismanagement of the government on the economic principles that make our country strong. People are losing jobs because of uncertainty about NAFTA and because of the failure to build energy east and the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. These are all causing huge job losses for Canadians. My question is this: Why is there not at least one word about the private sector and about the economy and the need for people to find meaningful jobs so they can afford to buy houses. There is nothing in here that allows a free market to bear a great part of the responsibility for housing, which it wants to do, if the economic principles were in place.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I could respond by simply saying that this is a motion on housing.

However, I will go a little further. First, asking the government to build housing often creates very good jobs across the country.

Second, housing is a long-term investment. Investing both financially and socially for the long term provides stability in people's lives. When people have stability, it is much easier for them to look for a job.

It is much harder for a homeless person to get a job when they have nowhere to take a shower and do not have a change of clothes.

Someone who does not have stable housing will have a harder time studying. I have seen houses in Nunavik where 14 people were living in a home with two or three bedrooms. How can children study well in a house like that?

It goes without saying that if we invest in housing, we invest in people and the economy, period.

[*English*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much welcome this opportunity to speak to the motion by the hon. member for Saskatoon West. It gives me the opportunity to update the House and Canadians on the impressive progress we are making to increase the supply of quality, affordable and suitable housing, especially for the most vulnerable in our society.

From day one, our government has understood that housing matters. It is a cornerstone of our strategy to grow the middle class in Canada, to grow our economy and help more Canadians join the middle class. From day one, we have seen the challenges Canadians face in finding affordable housing. That is why one of our first priorities was to bring the Government of Canada back into housing after many years, too many years, unfortunately, of neglect. We have acted decisively with historic long-term investments. We have consulted widely. We have listened to Canadians. We have collaborated with partners across sectors and all orders of government. As I will demonstrate shortly for members, hundreds of thousands of families are already benefiting.

● (1040)

[*Translation*]

Investing in housing goes well beyond just bricks and mortar. As our Prime Minister said, all Canadians deserve to have a home, a place where they feel safe, where they can have confidence in their future and focus on themselves and their family.

It also means building inclusive communities for everyone and making sure that all Canadians have affordable housing that meets their needs. Unfortunately, too many Canadians simply cannot afford suitable housing. At this time, approximately 1.7 million families in Canada are in housing need. These families are living in housing that is overcrowded, unaffordable or in need of repairs. In addition, nearly 25,000 Canadians experience chronic homelessness every year.

In many urban areas, the housing supply simply does not meet the demand. The people building our communities, by which I mean middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join them, including teachers, nurses, store clerks, construction workers and so on, are struggling to make ends meet. This situation is unacceptable and must change.

My role as Minister of Families, Children and Social Development is to improve the lives of all Canadians. That is why one of our government's priorities when it was elected was to immediately increase investments in housing, and that is what it did starting in budget 2016. That budget included a $2.7-billion investment for two new initiatives to increase the supply of affordable rental housing across the country. Budget 2016 also made an additional commitment of $2.3 billion to immediately improve housing conditions for low-income households, seniors, northern and indigenous communities, and survivors fleeing unfortunate situations of family violence.

Our first budget also included nearly $112 million in new investments over two years in the homelessness partnering strategy. This significant new investment represented an increase of 50% in the funding allocated to the strategy and the first increase in federal funding to combat homelessness since the strategy was implemented in 1999.

My colleague from Saskatoon West is well aware that, since 2016, we have invested over $4.7 billion in affordable housing through various programs, including the affordable housing initiative, long-term federal-provincial-territorial social housing agreements, and the social infrastructure fund. By so doing, we have helped 945,000 households, including families, seniors, women and children fleeing domestic violence, indigenous Canadians, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems and addiction issues, veterans, and young Canadians, and that is just the beginning.

In November 2017, we announced the Canadian government's very first national housing strategy, a 10-year, $40-billion plan that will help more Canadians, starting with our most vulnerable populations, obtain affordable housing that they can call home.

The goal of this ambitious plan is to ensure that all Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and is affordable. Our plan will produce results for Canadians. Over the next 10 years, 530,000 additional families will finally be able to afford housing that meets their needs. Moreover, during this period, we will reduce chronic homelessness by more than 50%.

My colleague from Saskatoon West also knows, and will agree, that this is an historic strategy and an opportunity to implement lasting change that only presents itself once in a generation. That is why we consulted Canadians and experts across the country when developing the national housing strategy. I am very grateful to everyone for the time and effort they spent to participate in this important but all too rare conversation and for sharing their many ideas with us. These consultations meant that developing the strategy was truly a collaborative process.

The key pillars were a collaborative effort as well. We brought all the stakeholders together so that we could address each community's unique housing needs. After all, as the member for Saskatoon West knows, solutions for the housing needs in her riding are very different from the solutions needed in downtown Toronto or in Iqaluit, for example.

In the spring, we started introducing the key pillars of this ambitious plan. For example, we launched major initiatives to build up housing stocks, including the national housing co-investment Fund. This $13.2-billion fund will create 60,000 affordable housing units, and repair or renovate up to 240,000 units. Approximately one-third of the fund will be allocated to financial contributions, and the rest will be used for low-interest loans.

Since this is a co-investment fund, the partners will play a key role. The program encourages the provinces and territories, social and community housing providers, municipalities, the private sector and indigenous governments to work with the Canadian government to come up with solutions tailored to their communities' needs. It will focus on what Canadians really want and prioritize projects that exceed the usual affordability, energy efficiency and accessibility requirements. It will be aimed at individuals, communities, and partnerships and will come with specific targets for supporting survivors of family violence, seniors, and people with developmental disabilities.

In April, we also signed a historic agreement for a housing partnership framework with all of our provincial and territorial partners, at our first meeting in over a quarter century. This framework represents $7.7 billion in funding, which will be combined with equivalent contributions from the partners and invested in programs that meet the unique needs of Canadians, whether they live in a remote community in Nunavut, an urban area in British Columbia, a small municipality in Prince Edward Island, or anywhere else across Canada.

So far, Ontario, British Columbia and New Brunswick have signed bilateral agreements based on this historic framework. We expect to sign agreements with the other provinces and territories by April 1, 2019.

We also launched an initiative to keep federally administered community and social housing affordable, a critical step in protecting low-income Canadians in housing need. Each of these steps is based on other housing initiatives and programs that our government has implemented since it was elected in 2015.

● (1045)

For instance, in 2016, we announced the rental construction financing initiative. Interest in the program far exceeded our expectations, so much so, that we extended the initiative in budget 2018 and increased its funding, which now stands at $3.75 billion.

By 2021, the rental construction financing initiative will have helped create 14,000 new affordable housing rental units for middle-class Canadians. This is filling a gap between housing assistance and the rental housing market, where it is needed the most.

● (1050)

[*English*]

Similarly, the affordable housing innovation fund will create 4,000 new units over a five-year period by investing more than $200 million in innovative financing models and unique designs.

Finally, to stretch our investments in new construction even further, we are making approximately $200 million worth of federal lands available to community housing providers at a discount or at no cost.

This past summer, we also launched a new homelessness strategy, a 10-year $2.2-billion plan to reduce homelessness by 50%. This plan, called "reaching home", will give more communities more funding and tools to fight homelessness on their terms. It will lead to better solutions for youths, seniors, women fleeing violence, veterans, people living with disabilities and those from LGBTQ2 or racialized communities.

There is also new funding to improve the situation of indigenous people living in cities, who are eight times more likely to experience homelessness than other Canadians. Our plan also includes new funding for the territories so they can tackle the unique challenges of homelessness in the north.

To stretch our homelessness investment as far as possible, we have created tools to help streamline the process to get people into housing and to coordinate the support services they need stay in stable housing over the long term.

This work represents an incredible achievement over just two years. I am proud of how we have been able to collaborate with Canadians and other stakeholders along the housing continuum to launch programs that will make a lasting difference, but of course there is still much more work to do.

As I mentioned previously, we are working hard with provincial and territorial partners to sign bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories by April 2019. I know that members and other Canadians are particularly concerned about the difficult housing conditions in indigenous communities. Under the national housing strategy, $225 million has been invested in improving housing for indigenous families living in urban centres. An additional $200 million has been allocated to support urban indigenous households, through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories. In addition, $300 million will be provided to the three northern territories to support 3,000 households in their communities.

I am also working very closely with the Minister of Indigenous Services and indigenous leaders and organizations to co-develop distinct first nations, Métis and Inuit housing strategies. These strategies would meet the unique needs of each group and will be anchored in the principles of reconciliation and self-determination.

We have also launched major research initiatives to fill data gaps that exist around housing needs and conditions. I look forward to seeing the resulting research and learning how we can continue to make progress on creating better housing outcomes for all Canadians.

Finally, we are currently writing legislation that would enshrine the human rights-based approach to housing that is the foundation of the national housing strategy. We are planning to table this vital legislation this year and are confident that it will take us further toward the progressive realization of the right to housing in Canada, as has been called for for many years in the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This legislation would ensure that affordable housing remains a priority for all governments and would benefit all Canadians for generations to come.

I will say again that the Government of Canada is back in housing. In fact, we are back in a big way, with ambition, with support and with a desire to collaborate. Canadians and housing leaders across Canada are on-board with our new approach and I urge all members on the other side of the House to join them. Working together, we can deliver an inclusive national housing strategy that will improve the lives of all Canadians and strengthen our communities and our economy for years to come.

● (1055)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his leadership and work on the housing file.

I grew up in the 1960s and my parents had subsidized housing in Brandon, Manitoba. It helped allow my mom to finish school and my dad to work and have a place to live. It was very helpful. This points to the fact that for people today, just having a job does not mean they can afford housing. That is why I agree with the minister that the government needs to help people afford housing.

Saskatchewan has a provincial government that is moving away from rental supplements and the federal government is now attempting to enter agreements. Could the minister assure me that he will advocate for an agreement with my provincial government and that rental supplements will be an important part of that agreement, and that the Canada housing benefit will build on that so that housing will be affordable for people in Saskatoon?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I again congratulate and thank members on the other side, in particular, the member for Saskatoon West, for all the hard work they have done in the last years in stressing how important it is for every Canadian to have access to safe and affordable homes.

In this context, I am glad she is now aware that we will all be working together to make sure that the new partnership provided by the federal government will be felt across Canada, and certainly in her home province of Saskatchewan. I look forward to continuing my important discussions with the Government of Saskatchewan to make sure that the introduction of the Canada housing benefit in the spring of 2020 will lead to a new set of tools for people in Saskatchewan, particularly those struggle to make ends meet every day, and provide them with access to this important new benefit.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his passion on this file. I know he works very hard on this.

That said, we have very different opinions on how to get there when it comes to housing and housing needs. We talk about federal leadership, but we have to understand the barriers at both the provincial and municipal levels. We talk about developments, but we know that there are sometimes six-year delays.

If the federal government wants to take leadership on everything, what is it doing to make sure that things actually get built? There is all of this money available, but we know that housing is not getting built. Projects in my own riding and Toronto have been cancelled because of rising costs. The problem is that this is a full continuum. If we know that housing is not getting built, what is the federal government and its leadership going to do about things happening on the ground?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, the two key words in this conversation are "leadership" and "partnership", "leadership" because Canadians and housing leaders and experts, for many years, have been waiting for the return of the federal government in housing, and "partnership" because, as we have just heard, these investments make sense when they are made in partnership with provinces, territories and municipalities. That is extremely important to mention.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is one of those important organizations that has been advocating for a long time for the return of federal leadership and partnership. It has been working very effectively with us since 2016 to make sure that this new era for housing will be as effective as possible in support of its capacity to make housing a key element of its investments in communities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development for his speech.

I just wanted to point out that many groups are telling me that in rural areas like Salaberry—Suroît, Haut-Saint-Laurent or Soulanges, it is really hard to get funding to build social housing. One of the difficulties is meeting the criteria for building social and affordable housing in rural areas. For instance, the administrative criteria require a too-high minimum number of units, and this does not correspond to the size of projects in rural areas.

What does the minister have to say to people who need social housing, such as seniors, students who want to stay in school and people who are struggling to find well-paying jobs? Such individuals need housing, but they are struggling to find it, even though they work very hard. The current federal strategy is quite limited.

How can the minister address the situation now, rather than after 2019?

● (1100)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, the objective of the national housing strategy is to provide safe, affordable housing for all Canadians.

I am pleased that my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît not only embraces this objective, but also wants to work hard in the coming years to implement this strategy. I invite her to get in touch with my office, because flexibility and ambition are key ingredients to the national housing strategy.

Flexibility is needed because, as she said, the strategy must consider everyone's needs and circumstances, regardless of where they are in Canada. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has renewed its commitment, so I know that it will be able to provide considerable support to her constituents.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the work he is doing to help connect communities to the needs within the community. Municipalities are a key part of this. We have to get approvals for housing at the municipal level, then go through the bidding process and then get funds released through our strategy and through the provinces to the municipalities. Some people have been criticizing the length of time it takes for the money to flow into these types of projects.

Could the minister talk to us about the need for close relationships with municipalities and with provincial and territorial governments in order for this strategy to work effectively?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to work with the member for Guelph over the last few months, and I know how strongly he feels about the objectives of the national housing strategy. We share his desire to make sure that this makes a big impact in his riding. Again, the key words of leadership and partnership matter so much.

Partnership matters because the national housing strategy is designed in part through the co-investment fund, which means co-investing with municipalities, provinces, territories, the social sector and the private sector. It is when we have this type of partnership that the housing outcomes are the best they can be. It is certainly true that the ambitions are very significant, but it is also true that the outcomes will be very good in ridings like Guelph when we have members like the member for Guelph.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his work on this file, but one of the key tenets of the ending homelessness strategy of the previous government was housing first for those experiencing housing issues as a result of mental health challenges. The current government is killing that program.

Tim Richter of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness said this:

> The Housing First philosophy and Housing First programs are essential to preventing and reducing chronic homelessness, in fact, we won't prevent and reduce chronic homelessness in Canada without it.

I have had the privilege of working with groups in my riding, and they are very supportive of the housing first program that our government initiated. It is really disappointing to see the present government not making this program a priority in its homelessness strategy.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, the key to making good public policy in the federal government is the ability to listen to the views of others, which may not be exactly aligned with views we may have held for some time.

Tim Richter has been a key advocate of housing first. He has also been a key advocate of communities first because investment in communities first, in part through housing first, is what gives communities the best ability to make an impact on homelessness.

We are pleased and delighted to have been able to count on the advice of Tim and many others who make up the advisory committee in order to generate the new reaching home program. We are delighted and so grateful for their efforts, and we look forward to working with them in the coming years to make sure that chronic homelessness becomes history in Canada.

● (1105)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I will be sharing my time with the member for Sarnia —Lambton.

I am pleased to stand to debate this NDP motion. For all the viewers, I am going to read it into the record so that they know what we are debating today.

It states:

> That, given that a housing crisis is raging in Canada and that 90% of the funding for the government's national housing strategy will only flow after the next election—

This is key:

> —and that much of the funding depends on collaboration with provincial governments and the private sector, the House call on the government to: (a) recognize the right to housing as a human right; and (b) bring forward 50% of the strategy's funding before the next election to invest in...housing for Indigenous communities...the construction of new affordable housing, new social housing units and new co-ops units...a plan to end homelessness...the renovation of existing social housing and old housing stock...the expansion of rent supplements...the administration of programs that meet the special needs of seniors and persons with reduced mobility.

To begin, I will address the first portion of this motion, which is something that has been widely debated with the NDP. It is housing as a human right. We have different philosophies on this, and we have all wondered which is the best.

We in the Conservative caucus have sat down to discuss this. We have talked about the housing continuum. To be honest, one of my concerns with the housing continuum is when we start talking about the legal and judicial system. Is that the right thing to do? We should actually be addressing homelessness and housing issues one way, and I am fearful any time we try to put that into the judicial system. A good plan and a good program is what we need first.

The second portion of this motion is about spending the money and bringing 50% of it forward as allocated in the first year of the 11-year program. As I indicated, we are talking about a program that has been brought forward from after the next federal election. As a reminder, we have had a majority government since 2015, and this is basically its platform. I thank the government for giving us its national housing strategy, which is part of its 2019 platform. However, unless the work is actually getting done, that is all I see this as being.

I want to go back to something else we are discussing. We are asking the government to start spending money and to start getting things done. Unfortunately, I have to remind the House and the member that this is a government that has not built pipelines, nor held judicial nominations. We have problems with trade negotiations, if anyone watched the updates from yesterday. We have immigration backlogs. We can name one thing after another. That is what we are seeing here. We have even talked about the money that Veterans Affairs has left on the table, an amount of over $300 million. Therefore, asking a government that cannot get the job done to get the job done is like blowing in the wind. I just do not know if that is going to really do it.

I started to review what we are doing, how money is being left on the table, what has been done for indigenous communities, where new affordable housing is being built, what the impact on homelessness has been, the current housing stocks and looking at the needs of seniors. These are all things that we need to look at, and they are all very important.

Therefore, by no means am I trying to say this is not an important issue. I look at housing as part of that. In first year psychology one studies Maslow and the principle that basic shelter is one of the key things. However, as Conservatives, we have a different philosophy on how we get there.

For me, a strong economy will allow for stronger programs. When I hear the NDP saying we should put the cart before the horse, I say let us put the horse before the cart. We need to have strong economic policies and a strong economic engine to drive these social programs and make sure that all Canadians have their essential needs. The cost of housing also comes into that.

Therefore, we should begin by looking at a simple business plan when we are looking at the business model of housing. It is like owning a retail store: the higher the demand, the greater the need and potentially the greater the cost if supply is low. In the case where there is too much supply, we know the costs can go down. It is one of those simple business philosophies.

Since the Liberal government has been in place, it has talked about all it has done. However, looking at the data from CMHC, we see that for a bachelor or a three-bedroom apartment there has been absolutely no change since 2015 on these figures. There have been no vacancy changes. Those rates continue. The government talks about how much it is working on affordable housing. We have seen absolutely no change in three years of data.

However, if we are looking at one- or two-bedroom apartments, we have seen that the vacancy rates for those are on the decrease. It is a 2.5% or a 2.7% vacancy rate.

● (1110)

I spoke to a person in the city of London who deals with affordable housing. It was an organization that was basically setting up a housing bank. We recognize that there are many ways of finding housing now. Some people go onto Kijiji, some people go into the CMHC organizations and look for things like that, or they look on social networks within their communities.

However, in the city of London this summer, only 11 affordable places were available for a population of almost 400,000. There we see the issue. It is a supply issue, so we need to get shovels in the ground. We know that.

We also know there are issues when we start talking to CREA, the Canadian Real Estate Association. We talk about the new stress test that the current government has applied for mortgages. It is not just affecting first-time homebuyers, but also the people who are trying to get in and move from that first home into a larger home. We know their hands are tied right now as well.

We have different philosophies on how that should work, but CREA president Barb Sukkau has said, "The degree to which the stress-test continues to sideline home buyers varies depending on location, housing type and price range. All real estate is local, and realtors remain your best source." I go back to the realtors and ask them what they are seeing. We know we have seen skyrocketing prices. We know there was a high demand and we saw some things explode almost 75% over five years, with the cost of a house going up by 75%. We saw that in some of our regions.

I live in St. Thomas, Ontario and I could watch the cost of housing go up. For people in the city of Toronto, the next thing they knew it is hitting Richmond Hill. Then it is hitting Guelph, then Kitchener, then London, and now it has hit Port Stanley. We saw this cycle happen, but we have to talk about what we can do about this.

We know the average price, but when we put the greater Vancouver area and the greater Toronto area into the calculations we cannot sit there and say the average cost of houses in Canada is *x* number of dollars. The cost of a house in Vancouver is over $1 million, and in the city of Toronto it is greater than $750,000 as well. We have to see what is affordable.

That is one thing we have really lost. What is affordable? There is not really a benchmark anymore. Is it affordable to go and buy a house for the first time that is $300,000? Possibly it is not. There may be some families who have that opportunity, but many families, many first-time homebuyers, many parents and many families who are trying to get in there with their newborn child cannot afford a $300,000 home.

Therefore, this is the housing market issue that we have here, but this is also about the continuum of housing. We have to talk about what this does. When we talk about affordability, we have to look at housing as being an entire thing. How does it all strategize together?

I know a young woman who has two jobs and three young children, and is also going to school. She has left her husband and is currently living in second-stage housing. Her goal is to find a proper affordable house. There is nothing available for her. This is an issue. She would like to move on with her family. She would like to have a new life, but none of these things are happening because we know the shovels are not getting in the ground.

After three years of the current Liberal government, we do not see anything happening. It is story after story of people trying to get into housing.

What the government needs to focus on is how we can get our economy rolling so we can make sure developers are able to go out there and develop, so that people who want to buy a house can get out there and buy a house. We know that 50% of Torontonians are now renting. This has changed the way things are going, and the whole idea of having a house as part of people's retirement plan has kind of gone out the door. People are living differently. People are living paycheque to paycheque. We know that Canadians have greater debt. A whole bunch of things are happening here.

However, when it comes down to having a strong economy, this is where the government is absolutely failing, and that is what is concerning me. We can have strong housing, but if we cannot afford to purchase those houses because we have no jobs, it does not matter. What we are going to see is the housing continuum go out of whack. We are going to see that we need more social housing because people do not have jobs. For the people who may have been in those really expensive homes, we are going to see those homes decrease in value because people are losing their homes.

The current government needs to get back on track and try to actually negotiate deals like NAFTA. It needs to stop losing our manufacturing to the United States. Manufacturing makes up about 10% of our economy, so we have to think of these things. I live in a community where NAFTA is the number one issue right now, but that has not been addressed. I could carry on and share with members some of the stories I heard when I visited a place in London. We talk about shelters being 40% over capacity. The capacity is 65 people and the shelter has 85 people.

This policy and all of the policies the government has put forward are the problems in our housing continuum. I thank the member for putting forward the motion, but the government needs to do better and make sure the economy is hand in hand with housing as well.

● (1115)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was a very interesting environmental scan of the challenges we face, but I did not hear a single solution proposed for any one of the sectors of the housing market the member opposite just talked about.

I also want to correct the record on an earlier comment a member on her side made, that housing first and the use of HPS dollars to put people into housing has been discontinued. That is not true. The mandatory threshold has been changed, but the program has remained exactly the same. There is a bit of flexibility for wraparound services to keep people in the housing so that we are not just paying rent for people.

The member opposite said that a strong economy is what is required to create housing opportunities. The city I live in, Toronto, has probably one of the strongest economies right now in the country. That is exactly what is creating the housing crisis. The capacity to bid up the price of housing is creating a gap between those who cannot compete in that economy, and even those who are competing in the economy, and the finite number of houses. They are having a problem. Even though we have approved 34,000 units of housing in Toronto, my riding doubled in size in the last three years, largely as a result of decisions made at city council. The reality is that the gap in the middle is the problem. The member opposite has said that this is the area she thinks she would like to focus on. Could she provide one idea to create housing affordability that will not spur inflation and speculation in the market and make it even harder for people looking for their first home?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, this is where we start talking about federal leadership. We have to recognize that municipalities and provinces are part of this. One of the biggest issues, and he can laugh all he wants, is that we know that developments are being cancelled that have been on the books for nine months, for six years. This is what is causing some of those costs to go up. People have made down payments, and the next thing they know, the building is being cancelled. They can reinvest, but it is going to cost them $200,000 more. These are the issues we have. Are these federal government issues we can solve? They are not necessarily, but if we really have these partnerships they talk about, let us make sure that the municipalities are getting these things built. Developer fees are a huge part of the cost. How can we reduce all these fees? If we are going to be part of this, let us have those answers as well.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has identified the issue in her community. In my riding, which is a rural riding, we are seeing a vacancy rate of less than .01% because of the spillover of the housing crisis in Vancouver. There is nowhere to live. The mayors and councillors in the communities in my riding are saying that the free market is not going to resolve this and that we need non-market housing. They cannot build it without the support of senior levels of government. They are saying that it is an urgent crisis. They need help, and they are calling on Ottawa to get involved and come up with the critical investments they need. In fact, one needs to earn about $140,000 a year to buy a medium house in Parksville or the Comox Valley. The Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce has said that affordable housing is the number one issue.

The free market is not working. We need non-market housing. In the 70s and 80s, the non-market housing mix was about 10%. We are at 4% right now. We can look at cities like Vienna, where over 40% of the housing market is co-op housing. Clearly, the free market is not going to create enough supply. Certainly, people who live in our communities cannot afford it. The people who are maybe going to buy that supply will be the people who have enough money. Inequality is just going to continue to skyrocket, and we are not going to have people owning homes in our communities.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I was in Victoria during the spring, and I was talking to many of the real estate agents and developers out there. They were talking about the proposal put forward as part of the strategy so that people could have money and portable benefits. They said that this program is not going to take a chunk off the gap between what people can afford and the actual cost.

I agree that there is an absolute crisis in the greater Vancouver area. It has to be a multiple approach. However, my biggest concern is the Liberal government's approach. It has its blinders on when it comes to what happens in rural communities. I talked about it travelling down the road into those rural communities. We are seeing houses valued at $45,000 now valued at $475,000 in Port Stanley. We are seeing things like this happening all over the country.

I agree with him that there needs to be a base when it comes to social housing. We need to make sure that we help those who need help, but we also have to make sure that people can afford to have mortgages, and to do that, we need an economic driver. They have to go hand in hand. It cannot just be that we give them housing and then this will happen. It has to be a whole package, and I do not think the government is doing that.

● (1120)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is so much to talk about here. It is sad that I only have 10 minutes, but I am going to start with the priorities.

First of all, this motion calls for the government to bring forward 50% of the strategy's funding before the next election. I am glad it was put forward in this proposal. The government has a rather annoying habit of announcing funding that is only going to happen after the next election. It is mythical funding if the Liberals are not re-elected, and I am very hopeful that they are not.

We have seen the infrastructure money that was promised 10 years out. That is assuming that they will be re-elected twice, which is really scary. I think we need to spend infrastructure money in this country, and affordable housing is one of the areas that needs that funding. If I think about the promises the Liberals were elected on, they were going to run really small deficits, and they were going to spend that money on infrastructure in municipalities. However, here we are, the third year into their mandate, and less than 40% of their infrastructure money has even been spent. What a disaster that is.

In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, we have a lot of opportunities to spend that money. It is really badly needed. The affordable housing situation we have requires $40 million in renovations for the existing affordable housing in my riding. That said, I am in a similar position as some of the other members who have testified in this House today. There is no place affordable to live for anyone looking for a house. I had one of my constituents call the office, a single mother just coming out of the women's assault centre. She had no place to live for her and her two children that she could afford, and she is working full time.

The wage base has not kept up with the increase in house prices. We certainly need to do something about that. I would love to see the government actually spend the money that was promised and put it into the affordable housing area.

With respect homelessness and the plan to end homelessness, I was on the board of a homeless shelter. We have a significant homelessness issue in Sarnia. Maybe it is not as bad as in some of the larger cities, but still it is very serious. What we find is that in many cases, there are mental health issues, addiction issues and other problems that lead to people finding themselves in this homelessness place.

Interestingly, the homeless shelter I was on the board of put in place a unique solution of coming alongside those people, befriending them and helping them. They were able to pair them up with people they became friends with at the homeless shelter, and then they were able to live independently, and we would help them manage their money, because many times they were not very good at managing the money the government was providing to support them. It was so successful, in fact, that the Province of Ontario decided to donate money to the homeless shelter, or provide funding, to continue to expand the program, because we were very successful in getting people out of homelessness and into independent living. Part of the success of that solution is finding affordable housing. We can see how affordable housing is going to be so important to achieving a number of the things that are in this motion today.

This motion also talks about the administration of programs that meet the special needs of seniors and persons with reduced mobility. I was pleased to rise the other day to speak to Bill C-81, which was about people with disabilities and how we are going to enable them to have the same rights and freedoms other people enjoy in the country. I shared an example that I think speaks to the affordable housing area.

We have a fellow in my riding who was, unfortunately, paralyzed in an accident and is in a wheelchair. He is such an inspiration in our community. He partnered with the architect for a fundraiser that the hospital has called the dream home. They sell tickets for the dream home, and it is a way of raising money for the hospital. In this case, they worked together, he, Dan Edwards, and the architect, to create a visitable home. It is a home that is totally accessible for a person in a wheelchair, who can absolutely cook and do all the things they need to do in a house, and it is a reasonable price,

● (1125)

I think there are ideas out there that could be incorporated into affordable housing, because many people who find themselves in need of affordable housing are seniors. Our seniors are struggling to make ends meet, and they are finding it very difficult to find places they can afford to live. The size of their pensions or their CPP and OAS is not increasing, and as the price of a place to live continues to inflate, they are the ones having difficulty. In many cases, over the years, they are going to become less able to walk and will have other disabilities that will need to be dealt with. Certainly, this is an area where, if we are building affordable housing, we should make sure that we are making it accessible and think about seniors and the needs they are going to have.

The other part of the motion I want to talk about has to do with housing for indigenous communities. There is an awful lot of rhetoric coming from the Liberal government about its nation-to-nation relationship. However, when I look at what is actually happening, there is a lot of talk but there are not a lot of results, when we think of building housing, addressing the boiled water advisories, etc.

There is a need out there, but we want to make sure that we do not get back into a situation such as what happened at Attawapiskat. Members might remember when $300 million was given to the community. There were about 80 people in the community, and they were all living in tents and horrible living conditions. In my mind, there was no resolution, because $300 million should have been enough to build affordable housing and it should have been satisfactory.

There is a need the government is not addressing within our indigenous communities. It would be great for the government to spend some of the money it futuristically planned. It should spend it now, because the need is immediate, and it is important that the government do that.

On the right to housing as a human right, I am not sure I am really on that page, because as soon as we say it is a human right for people to have housing, the question will be what kind of housing they deserve. There is no definition provided of what is acceptable. Do we think everyone should have a $300,000 house, or should we all be able to buy a house in Vancouver or Toronto? I think that is a point of discussion.

My youngest daughter recently purchased a home. They are first-time home buyers in London. The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London indicated that the typical price of a house there is probably $300,000. Well, for a first-time homebuyer, one needs a 20% down payment because of what the finance minister put in place. That is $60,000. What kind of young first-time homebuyers have $60,000? If they do not have parents who are reasonably well off and generous, they are not going to be able to get into the housing market. Therefore, another helpful suggestion I would give to the government is to get rid of that 20% requirement for a down payment. I mean, if one is going to have a mortgage of $240,000, there is not that much difference between that and one for $300,000, but it is a huge difference in terms of young people being able to have that dream of owning a home. I think that is important as well.

When we look at all the parts of the motion before us, there are many priorities the government could be doing something with. I hope it spends money on infrastructure. I hope it meets the needs of indigenous communities. I hope it provides affordable housing by letting members of Parliament who are in the House actually submit what the municipalities need in their areas. There is more than enough need to help the government spend the 60% of infrastructure money that has not yet been spent.

I do not see a plan to end homelessness coming from the government, but there are many wonderful solutions in communities, such as the one I talked about, that could help end homelessness. I am glad to hear that the housing first program was not cancelled, because it is certainly something we need. We have to have a place where people can go, because that is part of getting people back to health and back to work.

I did not talk about the expansion of rent supplements, because I did not really understand what was intended and what they would like to see in place. Because there is no affordable housing, the amount of money the government is giving for rent is not enough, which I think is fair to say, and it is worse in larger communities like Vancouver and Toronto than it is here.

Overall, I am glad to see that the motion was brought forward.

● (1130)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this summer I attended a lot of farmers markets around my riding and I had the opportunity to hear from constituents on a lot of issues. I spent four hours at the farmers market, so I had lots of time to talk to people.

Unfortunately, many single seniors are women. I heard from a senior in Preston. She lives in her own home. She gets the maximum amount of OAS and GIS, which amounts to just over $18,000 a year. She is really concerned that she is going to lose her home as a result of not having enough income. The cost of utilities increase and taxes increase every year.

Would the member like to comment on the need for a special program targeted at keeping our seniors in their homes for as long as possible so that they do not become homeless?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, my NDP colleague is absolutely right. Single women who are seniors are some of the poorest in the country. What they receive as income is not increasing but everything else is inflating. Many of them face the situation of losing lose their homes. Then where will they go? We do not have enough long-term care facilities. Those are jammed up as well.

We need to come up with a solution. It does not have to be a complicated one. We already have a way to give them money. They are receiving the OAS. We could make an adjustment to the OAS. The government made a very small adjustment of $60 a month but, to be honest, it needs to be more than that. We are seeing disparities for people who live in rural areas of $500 and people living in large cities probably $1,000 a month gap.

We do need to come up with a plan and that would be a good place to start.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to hear people talking about the needs of seniors and the need for housing for seniors.

I would like to bring to the attention of the member what we are doing for seniors specifically within the national housing strategy and I would ask for her opinion on it.

The projected number of new housing units will be 60,000, with 240,000 units repaired with the co-investment fund. Of that, 20% of the units are being set aside specifically for seniors. On top of that, 2,400 units will be available for people with developmental disabilities. For the first time in the history of the country, there is a defined spending program for people in that category.

As well, 25% of all new builds, that is 25% above and beyond the seniors housing of 60,000 units, must be built with universal access so that seniors can move in or age in place.

On top of that, the Canada housing benefit is a new rent supplement to make sure that people who fall below the poverty line who fall into core housing needs can be lifted up with rent supplements.

Would the member not agree that is a program to help house seniors and will she support it?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: That is interesting, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure if those programs are only going on in Liberal ridings, because this is absolutely the first time I have ever heard of them and we have all the needs that he listed in my riding. It definitely is a step in the right direction but zero of the programs that he talked about have made their way to Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked this question earlier of one of our NDP colleagues but I did not receive an answer.

The motion outlines six different starting points, so to speak, but totally ignores that the private sector has a big role to play in providing the kind of affordable housing that Canadians need.

One would think the NDP could at least have included something about the private sector. Maybe my colleague will have some insight on that.

● (1135)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, philosophically, the NDP is always looking for the government's and somebody else's money to do things rather than looking at the private sector.

There is a real opportunity for the government to partner with the private sector. There are some innovative solutions that talk about creating smaller affordable housing units of maybe 800 or 900 square feet.

There is a program in my riding called Rebound that is looking for housing for youth, many of whom are homeless. This is an idea that would fix the homeless part of a program as well as the affordable housing problem.

In order to build that, there are people in the private sector who want to partner with the government. If the government would be willing to spend some of that infrastructure money in a program designed to build this kind of affordable housing, that would really help.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

It is a huge honour to rise today to speak to a very important issue.

In just three years, we have seen the cost of real estate in my riding go up 50%. We saw the housing crisis happen in Vancouver, and people sold their homes and moved to Vancouver Island, to Victoria. Then those people moved up island to our communities, which were very affordable for many years. It is affecting people in our communities. Homelessness is on the rise. More and more seniors are living in poverty. In fact, we are seeing more seniors at our homeless shelters than ever before. Young people are losing hope. Working families are struggling to make ends meet. People living with disabilities or accessibility issues are finding it harder and harder to find a place to live.

This month I held three town halls in my riding to hear from residents about this issue. They made it very clear that this is the most important issue affecting people in our riding. We were fortunate to have experts come and sit on panels to talk about the situation.

One group that was there was the BC Non-Profit Housing Association. It brought forward the housing affordability definition. We can all agree that if someone is spending more than 30% of before tax income on rent and utilities, it is no longer affordable. In my riding, over 50% of renter households are spending more than 30% of their income. In fact, a quarter of renter households in my riding are now spending over 50% of their income. This is outrageous. There is no way people can put money aside to buy a home at some point in the future, or just to meet simple needs such as clothing, medicine and food. People are struggling. They are having to work two or three jobs just to make a living, never mind setting aside money for retirement.

I think about the most vulnerable. In British Columbia, someone on income assistance receives a housing allowance of $375 a month. Thirty-six months ago, the average price of a home in the most affordable community in my riding, which is Port Alberni, was $192,000. Today, it is $303,000. People are moving into our community and commuting out because it is the most affordable place. The problem is that people have to have an income that is almost 50% higher than the average median household income to be able to buy a home now, which now costs $303,000.

More and more people are not able to buy a home and more inequality is happening. People who can afford it are coming in and buying five or 10 houses. They are renting them out and driving rental prices up. As we know, people living on low incomes struggle to make ends meet. When they cannot pay their rent, they are pushed out onto the street to find another place to live. However, when there is a vacancy rate of .01%, they cannot find a place to live. Those rents are now higher than the threshold of $375 a month. More and more people are turning to the street or shelters. They are falling through the cracks or living in precarious situations.

In a question earlier, I identified that to buy a house in Parksville or Courtenay one would need to have an income of over $140,000. Less than 6% of the people in those communities earn over $140,000. It is completely not working for people in our communities. We have heard loud and clear from local governments. They are calling on the federal government to invest in their communities immediately. This is an absolute crisis. When there is nowhere to live and young people are losing hope, it is a big problem for all of us.

We can look at where we were in the 1970s and 1980s when 10% of our housing was non-market housing. Today, it is 4%. The Conservatives' approach that the free market will resolve it and we will just build more supply has not worked. It has completely failed. The Liberals' approach that they will roll out money over 10 years if they are re-elected and house 50% of the homeless people in Canada does not work for 50% of the homeless people because they are not going to have a place to live. As well, 10 years is too long.

We have seen bold investments from the Province of British Columbia. It has shown the Government of Canada what urgency looks like. It has rolled out $1 billion this year and is going to roll out $7 billion over the next 10 years. It would be great to have a federal government that does not just give it $31 million a year in transfers but actually matches the funding. This is an opportunity to support people who are falling through the cracks, but also the local economy.

● (1140)

We have heard the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce say loud and clear that this is the most important issue. Dianne Hawkins said, "Employers and their employees have been impacted by the lack of affordable housing and income inequity which exists in our area. Access to safe, quality, affordable housing and the supports necessary to maintain it create one of the most powerful social determinants of health. The Comox Valley needs a continuum, or wide range of housing solutions that target a full spectrum of population groups." They are saying that it is actually limiting economic growth in the region for small and medium-sized enterprises.

We need to create diversity. There are countries that are doing it. In Europe over 30% of the housing stock is non-market housing. In Vienna, it is over 40%.

I was fortunate enough to live in a co-op housing project that was built in the 1970s and 1980s when the federal government actually invested in housing, before it started downloading in the 1990s. In 1993, Paul Martin cut federal transfers on housing to the provinces, downloaded on the provinces and then the provinces started downloading on local governments. I sat in local government. I remember how hard it was for us to come up with the capacity to deal with this complex situation. Most municipalities do not have the capacity, aptitude or resources to take on this problem on their own. They are relying on senior levels of government to invest and get involved.

When people cannot find a place to live, it affects their mental health. It affects child welfare. That is a huge problem in British Columbia and it is connected to housing. One of the most important determinants to health is housing. The stress this is causing families is unbelievable. Is this what we want? Is this the type of society we want in the future for our children? Do we want them to live under so much stress and have to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet? We know that 30% of single women over the age of 65 are living in poverty. We are failing them. This is an opportunity to help them.

I think about working families a lot. The most important investment one makes in life is a home. Right now, so few people are making that investment because they cannot afford to. The biggest economic leakage in people's lives is when they cannot afford to buy a home. The biggest economic leakage in communities is when people outside the communities or the country buy all the housing. That wealth is leaving. Rural communities know too well about wealth leaving their communities, something which unfortunately, we are getting far too used to.

This is the beginning of a crisis. This crisis is not going away. People who have had to move to more affordable places in my riding are now in the most affordable, and it is compounding. They have nowhere to go. There is nowhere left to go. This problem is not going away and they are not going away.

I met someone at one of my town halls and every day since that town hall, I wake up and I think about Marcy. She has lived in my community for over 30 years. She has been homeless for the past four years. With low vacancy rates and rents that are sky high, she has not been able to find a place to live. She has been living in her van. She actually upgraded to living in a trailer on a property and she is worried that the bylaw officer is going to move her out. She worries about that every day. This is what Marcy worries about. The free market is not helping Marcy right now. She needs help and it is our duty to help her come up with the solutions. We can do that. We can create more co-op housing.

Indigenous elders say that there is nowhere to live on their reserves and in their communities. There is overcrowding. Sixteen people live in one house. The government's promise to fix that has not come to fruition. There are 10 indigenous communities in my riding and I cannot name one that would say that the federal government has lived up to its promise to support indigenous housing. Verna is a 76-year-old indigenous elder who barely gets by on her pension. She was hit with a rent increase and a big hydro bill. She is like Marcy. She is concerned, not just about herself but she is also concerned about the youth.

This is a problem. I am glad we are having this discussion today. I could cite so many comments from my constituents. I am grateful they shared their experiences. We need to be vigilant. We need to work collectively and we cannot wait 10 years.

● (1145)

We need money to roll out the door right now. The government believed it needed to buy the Kinder Morgan pipeline, which we know was a big mistake. If the Liberals could come up with $4.5 billion for a leaky pipeline, why can they not come up with $4.5 billion for our seniors, our elders and our most vulnerable? The government needs to do this immediately and it needs to address it and get money out the door.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and respect the passion with which the member opposite brings his voice to this debate. However, let me assure him that the transfer to B.C. was well over $30 million last year. In fact, one transfer alone in Victoria, which will bring the city of Victoria, according to Mayor Helps, down to functional zero in homelessness, was $31 million from the federal government. That is one project.

If we add to that, funds for a project in Nanaimo, through the innovation fund, not an indigenous housing fund per se, went to the friendship centre. We built one of the most amazing projects on the west coast, in fact across the country. It is a 26-unit passive housing. It is providing housing for elders, youth aging out of care, families and kids going to university in Nanaimo.

I can assure members as well as the modular housing program just unveiled in Vancouver last week, again with federal money, there are substantial investments.

The member may want to talk to the provincial government to find out that half the money it announced came from the federal government. In our first year of office, we tripled transfers to provinces on housing. In fact, our spending on housing went from $2.3 billion under the Conservatives to $5.86 billion in our first year of office. The next year it grew to $8.6 billion, and it is growing to $40 billion over the next 10 years.

If the situation facing renters is so critical, could the member explain the B.C. government's decision yesterday to increase rents by 2.5% after taking the recommendation of 4.5% from the bureaucracy? How is rent going to be controlled in B.C. if the NDP government in B.C. is approving 2.5% rent increases?

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, there is so much to unpack there, especially the member's numbers. Right now he is saying that he is willing to match the province of British Columbia dollar for dollar. That is not happening.

I will put a question on the Order Paper and I will deliver it to the member myself, because he is not doing that. The government is not doing that. The Liberals are not matching dollar for dollar. The province of British Columbia scaled back the rental increases that were set by Christy Clark and the previous Liberal provincial government. It was going to be 4.5%. Again, this is misleading information in the House.

The Liberals do not understand the sense of urgency. If they can find $4.5 billion for a leaky pipeline, they can find $4.5 billion for people who need a home today. The province of British Columbia is rolling out a billion dollars this year. Why is the federal government not matching it with a billion dollars to make a difference to the lives of people in our communities and to the businesses in our communities so they can grow? Free market is not working. It failed under the Conservatives. The Liberal government talks about the future. It talks about 10 years down the road. People need help now.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody on this side of the House is saying that the free market is going to solve all the housing problems in Canada. I have illustrated from my riding, and many of my colleagues the same, that we work in partnership with those who are investing in the housing crisis.

I have not counted the words in the motion, but there are a lot of them. Why in a motion of this length would there not be a word about the free market, about the private sector and partnerships that would help to create the environment, where housing could be constructed and people could have the dignity of having a job that would actually lead to good housing?

● (1150)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, there are two components to that. The free market is involved. The free market will continue to move along like it has. That is not going to change. We need some non-market housing out of the free market to protect housing stock for people who need it. That is also going to help those people to also put some money aside and then be able to jump into the free market. That is the most desirable place for people.

Then there are other people who need housing security. The free market is going to help build these homes. Most of these projects are not going to be built by non-profit housing developers. Some will, but a lot of them are going to be done with builders, contractors and trades people, people of small businesses. Free market is absolutely part of the mix and will continue to be part of it. It needs to be a partner.

We need to work with all levels of government, with the private sector and the non-profit housing sector. All of us together need to work more collectively. However, we need the resources. We need the government to understand the important role it needs play, like governments in Europe have done. We are so far off the mark with 4%. A goal of 50% homelessness in 10 years is too far and 50% is 50% short.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saskatoon West for introducing this critically important motion and for her leadership on housing, which has benefited all of us over the time that I have been here.

We have heard a lot today about the suffering of Canadians, especially the working poor, who are struggling more and more to afford their rent each month. However, today I would like to begin by telling members another side to the story.

Last year, in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, I held a number of public round table forums with small businesses to learn how we, as elected officials, could help them succeed in rural British Columbia. I invited the provincial and municipal representatives to join with me so business owners could speak to all three levels of government at the same time, which maximizes their time, and so their recommendations would not get lost in this finger-pointing, which often goes on between the three levels of government around issues. I met with businesses from across the Elk Valley in Fernie. Owners from central Kootenay gathered together in Nelson. I also met with owners of small businesses in Invermere.

I wrote a report on the forums, a copy of which can be found on my website. I encourage all members to spend time speaking with their small business owners. They may be surprised by some of the results.

What was the most consistent hurdle that small business owners in my riding complained about? It was not taxes or red tape; it was the lack of affordable housing, keeping them from being able to expand their businesses.

We often think about homelessness and housing issues as being a big city problem, but rural areas and small towns have housing issues as well. The challenges for these businesses is finding staff, particularly during the high season, that then can find a place to live.

It used to be that university students would flock to the Kootenays for a summer job. They would work hard all day and spend their evenings and weekends hiking, mountain biking, canoeing and enjoying the great natural outdoor experiences that we had to offer. However, this is becoming more difficult all the time. Students and adults alike, looking for work in towns like Fernie, Invermere and Nelson, are finding they have no place to live. What used to be affordable rental housing for the summer is now being often let out on a nightly or weekly basis for services like Airbnb, which means a lack of accommodation for small businesses to be able to expand their business.

This is not only a problem in my riding. A September 22 CBC story entitled, "Housing crunch a concern as Banff seeks workers for ski season", found that in areas like Banff and Canmore, there were very low vacancy rates and no place for people to live. To quote Daniel, "I found lots of jobs, and got lots of job offers, but the accommodation is still the hard part to find."

That is why we need a strategy to increase rental housing stock across the country. We need to work with the provinces to give municipalities the ability to regulate and tax Airbnb units in their areas. We need to take into account that the lack of affordable housing has an impact that goes beyond just the residents. It impacts our entire economy.

In a country with weather as extreme as Canada's, the idea that housing is a human right should not be a question. No one can survive our -40°C winters without shelter. Nor should one have to.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes it clear. It states:

> Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Housing is very much essential to that.

Canada is proud to have been a signatory to the declaration since 1948. Any government would do well to begin developing its policies and programs by ensuring these very basic rights are met. However, 70 years of paying lip service to the declaration is not good enough. I truly hope the Liberal government follows through on making housing a right for all Canadians, which I believe I heard it plans to do later this fall.

In speaking with my constituents in Kootenay—Columbia, it is clear that we have serious problems with housing in our community, and I want to share some of the stories they shared with me.

● (1155)

Bill lives in a low-income senior housing unit in Nelson. His monthly cost for living in the facility has increased significantly with very little notice. Central heat and air conditioning were always included in the monthly rental. However, because of cuts in federal government funding, the landlord shut off the gas in May and began removing furnaces. Baseboard heaters were installed in each tenant's unit in July.

The consequence for Bill and other low-income seniors and disabled people living there was suffering through another exceedingly hot, smoky summer with no air conditioning, and now incurring the expense of an electric heating bill. In British Columbia, the cost for electricity is significantly higher than natural gas. Tenants were called to a meeting in August and were told they would have to sign new rental agreements. All but Bill signed, fearing they would have no other place to go.

In the village of Kaslo to the north of Nelson, a beautiful community on Kootenay Lake, there is no affordable housing at all. There is nothing available. There is no social housing, no assisted living spaces and no rooms. The Housing Society coordinator has a long list of individuals and families looking for housing. He receives calls every week from those trying to find a place to live. They are willing to move to Kaslo, but they cannot find a place to live.

George and Mary are an older retired couple who have lived and worked in Kaslo for many years. However, they could no longer manage living in their home. They sold their house last month and they now have to move, but they cannot find any place to go in Kaslo. There are no spaces available, so they are being forced to move to Nelson, which is an hour away, leaving their friends behind. They are fortunate they can afford a facility in Nelson.

A disabled gentleman from Fernie discovered bed bugs at a seniors residence. As a result, he effectively became homeless. He had nowhere to go and he ended up sleeping outside. Travelling to Cranbrook was not an option for him either, as the Salvation Army shelter is only open in the winter.

The city of Nelson has affordable and social housing units, but vacancies are rare. Youth homelessness is a problem. There are families living in their vehicles.

Alan, a Nelson senior with a minor disability which prevents him from driving, has been forced to move to less expensive accommodation in Salmo, which is about a half hour drive away. His pension was no longer sufficient to allow him to live in Nelson. Salmo is more rural and has very limited public transportation, so he is feeling isolated and lonely. He used to stop by my office in Nelson frequently, but my staff have not seen him there since July.

These are some of the saddest situations that my staff and I regularly face. Seniors who have worked all of their lives and planned for their retirement are now finding they can no longer afford to live in their homes. When I was at the Farmers' Market in Creston this summer, a single senior woman, and unfortunately many of our seniors are single, came to me concerned about whether she could continue to live in her own home. She has lived in her family home for many years. She is maxed out on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, which is just over $18,000 a year. Her taxes and utilities are going up. She does not know whether she will be able to continue to afford to live in her home.

We need a program targeted directly at seniors and we need it now to try to keep seniors in their homes as long as possible.

When I was mayor of Cranbrook, I volunteered the city to be a pilot on poverty reduction in British Columbia, one of seven communities. We pulled together a coalition of agencies that helped people in need to help people who were living in poverty. When I asked what the number one thing they would do if they had the opportunity to try to reduce poverty in Cranbrook, their answer was consistently, regardless of what aspect of social support they represented, housing first.

People need to have a safe, secure place to live if they are going to get the rest of their life on track. To be able to seek employment, people need to start with a house.

These are problems, but they are solvable problems. It will take money to resolve them. It will take dedication and leadership to resolve them. We have to do that. If we do not do, we are failing Canadians.

I will be supporting this motion. I would certainly ask all my colleagues in the House to also support it. We need to work at ending homelessness today and we need to ensure every Canadian has access to affordable housing.

● (1200)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I share the focus and certainly the analysis that the best way to fight poverty is with a good, strong housing program such as the one we have through the national housing strategy. I have a couple of questions, but first I want to correct the record on this.

The last two years, federal transfers to the Province of British Columbia, to BC Housing, were $551 million, not the $30 million referenced by the member opposite earlier but $551 million. Five hundred million dollars is an interesting figure because that is the grand total of what the NDP promised in its platform in the last campaign to spend on affordable housing: $500 million for the entire country, not B.C. but the entire country. Just like the motion the New Democrats proposed today, they were going to front-end load it, which meant that in this year that party was promising to spend zero dollars on affordable housing. On homelessness, the boost was only $10 million and they complain that our boost of $100 million is too small. They promised 10% of that.

Why did the member opposite, knowing that the housing crisis was as bad as it was, sign on to a platform that was going to do nothing in this year to solve it?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Madam Speaker, I know that response was directed mostly for my colleague who spoke prior to when I stood here, but $500 million is a start. We will see as we move into 2019 that we will have a very aggressive plan for housing. It will be a plan that goes into effect immediately, not back-ending things as the current government is doing, and members will find it quite an exciting approach to the future. We have not done a good job to date in providing affordable housing. We have started down a path that maybe will help us get there, going forward, but we need to do a much better job. Members will find, when we reveal our 2019 platform, that we have some very exciting plans for housing across Canada.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I met a woman from Parksville at my town hall earlier this month. Her name is Lisa. She said, "I'm here to represent the families. My children are moving away because there is nowhere to live...they are moving to Europe...or come home to their parents' house because there is nowhere to live."

We know families are worried. In the member's community, are families worried about where their children are going to go? Are their children moving away? What is happening to the youth in the member's community, and how does that affect the culture and the intergenerational connect for families? We know that with no affordable child-care plan, a lot of families that are young and starting out do not have the money to pay for child care in their community and rely on their extended family. That is just one of the situations that people rely on their family for. Could my colleague talk about whether that is impacting his community?

● (1205)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Madam Speaker, the future of our youth is concerning on a number of levels. First, many of our youth are now working in precarious or part-time jobs where there is no certain future, there is no pension associated with it and there are no benefits associated with it. Therefore, we absolutely need to do a better job in ensuring that our youth have employment, going forward.

Housing is also an issue. We look at places like Vancouver, but even in places like Nelson and Cranbrook in my riding we are looking at an average cost of $400,000 to get into a home. People who have precarious employment will never get a home with that kind of situation.

We need to have affordable housing. We need to have housing that fits the income of the students we have these days, and of our kids going forward. There is nothing more important than having a place to call home, so we need to do everything we can on a number of fronts. Jobs are certainly part of that as well, making sure there are good jobs available, but we also need to make sure there are housing units available. The private-sector market is not doing it, or we would not have the homeless situations that we have today. We need to do a much better job, going forward.

Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton Centre.

As my colleague just said, nothing is more important than a home. Canada has one of the best housing systems in the world and it is getting even better. That is why I am so pleased to speak to this motion brought forward by my colleague for Saskatoon West. I live in the southern part of metro Vancouver and housing affordability is a big issue. As my colleague has just commented, a number of millennials are now finding it very difficult to stay living within that area. I know of two doctors, family doctors who are married who have just found it impossible to still live in the greater Vancouver area.

Many people are struggling to find housing that they can afford. This is an opportunity to talk about the investments that the government is making through CMHC to ensure that Canadians have access to housing that they can afford and that can meet their needs.

A home is more than just a roof over one's head. It is a place where Canadian families can thrive, where children learn and grow, where parents find the stability to succeed in the job market and where seniors can live in dignity. About 1.7 million Canadian households are in what is called "core housing need". These people are living in homes that either cost more than 30% of their income or are unsuitable for their circumstances.

Safe, adequate and affordable housing underpins inclusive communities and economies that thrive. Community housing, or social housing, refers to government-subsidized housing that is funded under a range of federal programs developed over time to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. It has been at the heart of Canada's response to housing challenges since the 1940s when we created housing for veterans returning from the Second World War. It has since provided housing for a variety of low- to moderate-income Canadians, from immigrant families looking to start their lives in Canada to seniors aging in place in their communities. That is why for three consecutive budgets, the government has made significant investments in creating affordable housing. In the past two years, the federal government has invested more than $4.7 billion in funding and subsidies of affordable housing projects across Canada. As a result, some 945,000 families will have a home that meets their needs and that they can afford, like in Surrey where government support for community housing has meant that 144 families in the Totem Housing Co-Operative, the Common Ground Housing Co-Op and the La Casa Housing Co-operative have places to call home.

In 2017, support of community housing took a further step forward with the country's first national housing strategy. This ambitious 10-year, $40-billion plan will ensure more Canadians. from the smallest, most remote communities to large urban centres, have a stable, affordable place to call home.

The national housing strategy explicitly recognizes the vital role of community housing. One of the first initiatives launched as part of the strategy was the new federal community housing initiative, administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This program is a 10-year, $500-million commitment that will ensure 55,000 community housing units across the country continue to be subsidized. Phase 1 of this initiative will deal first with operating agreements that are expiring imminently. It will fund them so that they can continue to offer affordable housing to their tenants. Then, in 2020, Phase 2 of the initiative will start to put in place new operating agreements for all providers as they expire over the coming decade. The federal community housing initiative gives housing providers much needed stability and predictability to continue to offer affordable units and carry out long-term maintenance and capital repair plans.

People will also be able to access a new technical resource centre and a sector transformation fund to help smooth the transition to new operating agreements. Of course, federally administered community housing is just one part of Canada's community housing landscape. Roughly 80% of community housing is administered through the provinces and territories. That is why this important housing sector is a central part of the housing partnership framework signed with our provincial and territorial partners. Through a new Canada community housing initiative, we will be investing $4.3 billion to be cost-matched by the provinces and territories. This will ensure that 330,000 homes across the country will continue to be affordable for Canadians.

● (1210)

We are committed to community housing and its role in creating inclusive, sustainable, productive and vibrant communities. The national housing strategy is the most ambitious demonstration of support for housing in almost 50 years. It will ensure Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford.

In South Surrey—White Rock, we know that many people are struggling to find housing they can afford. We are fortunate to have organizations and people bringing together the public, private and non-profit sectors to address this need. They are focusing on the most vulnerable Canadians: seniors, women and children fleeing family violence, children with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans and young adults. There are non-profit organizations, like Semiahmoo House, which has developed an inclusive, open and low-cost housing facility entitled Chorus. This 71-unit project caters to the income of the person or family, and it is inclusive. Inclusive means for people with disabilities, seniors and those living in poverty. It has created a better sense of community.

Semiahmoo House is pleased that we have a national housing strategy. Its CEO, Doug Tennant, said that they very much agree and support the idea of housing rights as human rights. They are glad government is taking this seriously and consulting broadly to implement this strategy.

This is a wonderful initiative, and I heartily support the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, everything my colleague said is valid. We understand that there are challenges, especially in his province. However, it is false to claim that the measures in the government's budget will help people. On the contrary, the money will not be spent until after the next election. The Liberals have a bad habit of doing this, and they have a bad habit of blaming the NDP for things like 2004, for example. The Liberals had been in power for 13 years between the 1990s and the early 2000s, and they did absolutely nothing.

We have to wonder why the government wants to wait until after the election to increase funding, when housing costs continue to rise in places like Toronto and Vancouver, B.C.

Why not invest right now to help these people? Why wait two years, when they managed to find $4 billion for a 60-year-old pipeline?

● (1215)

[*English*]

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Madam Speaker, I was at a groundbreaking announcement in Surrey, in June of this year, where they were actually in the ground building a facility. I just made reference to the 144 families who are experiencing the changes with respect to Totem Housing Co-operative, Common Ground Housing Co-op, and La Casa Housing Co-operative that they call home.

In my community, Semiahmoo Housing recently completed a facility for 71 low-income people and people with different types of disabilities. It is inclusive housing, which Inclusion International has seen as one of the best-practices models in the world. There is action being taken now. We should look forward to and be proud of the commitment the government has made over the long term. It is taking action today, tomorrow and longer term into the future.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, knowing there are 10,000 people on the list for affordable housing in Ottawa, I am so glad we have taken steps to invest money in the affordable housing sector. Just a couple of weeks back, under the rental construction financing initiative, we announced two projects with a private-sector company, to the tune of $75 million to construct affordable rental units.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he agrees that the involvement of private-sector companies in constructing affordable rental units is one of the very good strategies.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Madam Speaker, certainly, a strategy should involve our community more broadly, whether it is the business sector, the non-profit sector, the municipalities, the provinces or the federal government. We all have a stake in ensuring the people of our communities have safe and affordable housing, and we should all be engaged in that process. The more we can make access and availability an interdisciplinary approach, the better off all people will be.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the concern expressed by the NDP was that the money will not come until after the next election. Is the member aware that we have taken spending from the $2.3 billion that was left to us by the Conservative government and moved that to $5.86 billion in our first budget, and spent that in the first year of our government, and then in the second year of our government raised that spending level to $6.8 billion? In other words, almost a third of the money committed in our mandate to housing has already been spent. The other two-thirds extend for the next 10 years.

Is the member aware that it is not just a 10-year program after the next election, but a 12-year program with hundreds of millions of dollars being spent now and hundreds of millions of dollars well into the future, with up to $40 billion over the next 10 years?

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Madam Speaker, what a nice set-up. I am aware of that, thanks very much.

Again, he made reference to the money being spent right now and actually being on the ground and making a big difference in people's lives today. Certainly, over the next 12 years we will see many more of those changes. However it is a plan, and we should have a plan into the future. We should be responsible and respecting those greatest needs today, which is why the focus of the first part of this has been on those who are in greatest need and are at greatest risk. That should be where the initial stages and investments are focused, and certainly that is where they are. Over the long term, we will see a change more broadly across the spectrum.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure me to be part of this debate. It gives me a great opportunity to talk about our government's unprecedented leadership on housing through our national housing strategy.

As the minister who is responsible for housing mentioned in his opening remarks, our government recognized early in our mandate the challenges that Canadians face in finding affordable housing. We see too many hard-working Canadians being priced out of the communities where they work. People have to live in the communities close to their work. Even in my riding of Brampton Centre, affordable housing is of great importance for me, as well as for my constituents. We recognized the challenges and immediately took action.

Being a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development, I am proud to say that I have first-hand knowledge of the study done by the committee on the national housing strategy. Through this national housing strategy, the government wants to make sure that Canadians across the country can access housing that meets their needs and that they can easily afford. We want to do more.

We want partners in the co-investment fund to play a critical role. We want to achieve this goal. The strategy will focus first on the most vulnerable Canadians, including women and children fleeing family violence, seniors, indigenous people, people with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans and young adults.

To meet the set of tangible objectives, there will be a statutory body created to help the government keep the national housing strategy intact. Further, there are provisions for the national housing campaign, from time to time, to know the public views on different types and tenures over a multi-year period.

The government has decided to invest in the housing strategy as a national plan, built by and for Canadians. Over the next decade, it will invest $40 billion to build stronger communities and help Canadians across the country access safe, affordable housing. The ambitious plan promises to tackle everything from homelessness and the shortage of new housing units to repairs to existing units over the next decade.

The strategy will remove 530,000 households from housing need, cut chronic homelessness by 50%, protect 385,000 households from losing affordable homes, build 100,000 new affordable units, repair 300,000 affordable housing units and provide 300,000 households with financial assistance. Along with rental benefits and energy reduction plans, there will be a statutory requirement to have at least 20% of units meet accessibility standards.

The strategy commits to build vibrant and inclusive communities where Canadians want to live, work and play so that they have a chance for a brighter future. The goal of this government is to see that housing rights are human rights. Everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. The strategy will make certain that it is the fundamental right of every Canadian and meet their needs for affordable housing and ensure that no one is ever refused a home because of their gender, religion or background. Let us act in Canadians' best interest by encouraging people in each of our ridings to access the programs.

● (1220)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I notice talk of the number of programs put in place by the government and of the money flowing already. I have not seen that in my riding. Is this just being done in Liberal ridings, or more broadly?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Madam Speaker, this is the national housing strategy, a national plan, a plan for each and every affected Canadian. They deserve to have affordable housing to meet their basic needs. It is not for Liberals only. It is not for Conservatives or NDP only. It is a national plan for every Canadian.

● (1225)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the issue of housing here in the House by asking my hon. colleague a question.

The question has to do with the fact that, despite how good the Liberal strategy sounds on paper, we want to see more happening right now. What I am hearing from folks back home is that the money is not flowing.

There was an offer for a joint project in Manitoba, but there was actually only one applicant for that. We heard that the reason for that was the process, which is so cumbersome and convoluted that organizations with an interest had a real problem navigating and satisfying the conditions for the funding.

I am hearing from organizations that have federal funding for operating grants tied to their mortgages, which are coming to expire. I understand that the government, in some cases, has extended some of those operating grants. In other cases, it has not. However, for the organizations that are not part of the pick-and-choose approach of the government, they are still facing the expiration of those agreements. They do not know what they are going to do. For the organizations that were picked, it has just been put on hold.

We are hearing a lot about a great strategy on paper, but why are people not seeing that at the ground level if the strategy is working so well?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Madam Speaker, this program has expanded everywhere. We want to work with all provinces, territories and municipalities so that the money will flow directly to needy persons, in particular to meet their basic housing need.

The question was why we were not providing funding to those in need. However, that is why the housing strategy is a nation-wide strategy and will provide funding to each and every province and municipality equally.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, there seems to be a bit of a contradiction here between some of the comments of government members, and I want to follow up on the comments by my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton.

We just heard from the previous government speaker, as we have from a number of them, that they have a $40 billion housing program over 10 years. However, the previous speaker just said that they have spent $4.5 million over three years, which is $1.5 billion a year, and not the $4 billion a year we would have if it were a $40 billion program over 10 year.

Could my colleague elaborate on why such a small amount only has been spent in the $40 billion plan the Liberals keep talking about, because as my colleagues have said earlier, this is just the tip of the iceberg?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Madam Speaker, the funds that have now started flowing are flowing evenly to each and every municipality. We completed our study of the homeless community and the funding has started and will keep flowing. It is a 10-year plan, and the funds will keep flowing into the future.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of Nanaimo—Ladysmith as its member of Parliament, and as someone formerly elected there locally. Thus I have a very deep understanding of the imperative of having full support for affordable housing in our region. Housing is at the foundation of everything. We work from our homes, they give us shelter, and they allow us to be healthy. Housing is foundational, and so it is very important for all levels of government to take a role in that.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Windsor West.

The housing needs in Nanaimo are described in depth by a number of my constituents. I polled everyone this summer and received at least 500 responses. I heard terrible things from them. For example, "I am a 78 years old lady and I have to pay $1,700 a month rent. Very hard on a pension. I'm not ready for seniors living yet." Another said, "We have lived in 6 homes in 4 years because we can't find a long-term rental home. On my partner and my caregiving incomes, we can't afford to buy." Another wrote, "In a few years I shall be entirely dependent on my CPP & OAS. My medication cost me approximately $500 per month. It's going to be very difficult to find a affordable rental." It goes on and on.

Most recently in Nanaimo, the homelessness crisis has been made explicit by the establishment of a now 300-person tent city right on our waterfront, blocks away from where the Prime Minister and his cabinet met this summer at the convention centre. What triggered this was an offer from the provincial government for temporary affordable housing, a 44-unit modular housing complex. City council voted no to allowing affordable housing to go on that land. In frustration, the homeless community and advocates created this very visible expression of the need for housing and their great displeasure at the elected city council's refusal of the provincial government's offer.

I visited the tent city, and I heard stories that were heartwarming and heartbreaking. One young woman told me she has a job but was on leave from it while she dealt with an addiction issue. She has qualified for addiction treatment, but because she has no address, she is not allowed to do the final paperwork to get there. That is a jam I do not know how any of us would be able to get out of.

I heard other women describe to me the benefits for them of even having this really hard life on this vacant property with tents and tarps. They said things like it used to be that when they would go to job interviews with their shopping cart, it would not go so well. However, now that they have a little lock on the zipper of their tent and their neighbour will watch their stuff for them while they go over to the Salvation Army to shower, they can walk down the street like anyone else and at least have the opportunity to get their lives back on track. Another said that now that they are not thinking every moment about where they are going to sleep and keep their stuff at night, they have time and have now reconnected with their family.

These are just small things, and these people were very proud of the governance structures and support they had built within the tent city.

Now, of course there is also a terrible downside of having that concentration of people in deep need, fighting addiction issues and really just barely getting by. Crime has concentrated there. Homeowners from the neighbouring properties have had thefts, as have the local merchants. This is obviously not a solution, and I am not advocating for a tent city, but I applaud the organizers for making it front and centre.

The stats are extreme. The Nanaimo homelessness action plan 2018-23 just tabled with the city council of Nanaimo states:

> Put bluntly, Nanaimo faces pressures that threaten the integrity and sustainability of the current system if not addressed. First, the service system in Nanaimo needs to account for the challenges posed by changes in housing and labour markets; in particular, sharp rises in rising costs, low vacancy rates, and precarious income.

It goes on.

● (1230)

The government in power has a budget set aside for dealing with housing. If we build more units, it takes the pressure off every phase of homelessness, everywhere in the progression of housing needs and other pressures. Homelessness is reduced when people with some means can move into newly built places. That opens up some of the lower income spots and takes the pressure off. Therefore, we need to get building.

Our community is doing that. We have some real success stories that I want to applaud. The Ladysmith Resource Centre Association is working with the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia to build a 36-unit affordable housing project right downtown in Ladysmith. I am really proud and glad to be supporting that.

Also in Nanaimo, Brechin United Church has basically knocked down its church to redesign it completely so that affordable housing can be built into it. This is how the work gets done in our community.

The Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre has added, I believe, 60 units in total to Nanaimo's affordable housing stock. It built the first multi-family housing opened in British Columbia since 1999. It is a passive energy design complex, beautiful, innovative, full-of-art space for elders. It is a beautiful place. It has also taken over what used to be called King Arthur's Court, but has now been renamed Sanala. It was a real nuisance property and a problem for police. Its management, Chris Beaton and his team, have just transformed it and it has become much more of a home for families.

The John Howard Society is hands-on in Nanaimo. It works with men on parole who are trying to transition into a better life. Their rate of recidivism is virtually nil if they have gone through these restorative justice programs and lived within a therapeutic community where they reinforce each other's work and healing, taking responsibility for the crimes they have committed and recognizing their own trauma from childhood and addictions that got them into this place.

These are some anecdotes from the John Howard Society. A formerly homeless addict went to every agency in town, filled in every application, and because the John Howard Society worked with him, even when he was homeless, it made all the difference. We also heard about a homeless person who had had a career in the oil fields and a small contracting business, and because of addiction lost it all.

There are people who are very hurt out there and I am so grateful for the organizations on the ground that are helping them. For example the United Way in Nanaimo is a tremendous leader. It is part of the umbrella group that coordinates a response to homelessness and makes all the difference.

Through our work on the status of women committee, we have heard stunning stories of the rate at which women who face domestic violence become homeless. Haven Society's executive director Anne Taylor told us the following at committee:

> When a woman is forced to make the choice to leave her home because of violence, she is really being forced to make the choice to step into poverty and to bring her children along with her. Wage inequity, lack of accessible child care, and safe affordable housing are a few of the barriers she will have to navigate. This is on top of her safety concerns, the trauma she has experienced, and the high likelihood that she may not be believed or taken seriously or she she may even be blamed.

We also have a fantastic group, the Island Crisis Care Society, which hosts the Samaritan House right on the downtown strip in Nanaimo. It has told stunning stories about homelessness in our community. At the status of women committee, it stated, "we had an 82-year-old woman and a 76-year-old woman, who so far have accessed our homeless shelter for the first time." It said that 50% of the occupants of their women's homeless shelter over the last nine months are over the age of 50, women who have worked all their lives and through no fault of their own, due to housing affordability pressures, have become homeless.

Therefore, we have work to do. The government's commitments to invest in affordable housing are mostly after the next election. If it can find $4.5 billion to invest in a leaky old pipeline, surely we can spend as much money right now with these valued community partners and give Canadians the respect and the homes they deserve.

● (1235)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite will be very happy to know that we spent close to $6.8 billion on social housing and affordable housing programs last year, which topped up our first year's achievement of $5.8 billion, and there is more to come.

The member mentioned a project in her riding that is one of the best projects this country has ever built. I visited her riding to help open the project. The project was built by the friendship centre under the leadership of Chris Beaton, a proud Mohawk from Six Nations in Ontario who is now doing great work in Nanaimo. It is the Nuutsumuut Lelum housing program that houses 25 people.

The member opposite is a big fan of Jane Jacobs and of making sure of building intergenerational, multi-model communities and communities, not just housing. Indeed, this program provides housing for youth aging out of care and elders so that they can provide healing and opportunity and company for each other. It is a great intergenerational mix. It also provides the first affordable housing that has been built there, as she said.

Is the member aware that it was built with federal money, not through the indigenous program but through the innovation program? Is the member aware that indigenous groups are now allowed to apply for all of that housing money, not just the narrow band under the previous government?

● (1240)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I did mention that program specifically. It is well under way. We have been seeing it through its construction phases and we in Nanaimo are proud of it. The Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre as the proponent has been fantastic about partnering and finding as much money as it can.

I will note one of the other indigenous housing programs, which created a contest for indigenous housing ideas. It was like a *Hunger Games* for on-reserve housing. Here I was struck by the comment of Mary Teegee, chair of the Delegated Aboriginal Agencies Provincial Forum, who said:

> This issue of housing and poverty is not to be relegated to something as demeaning as a contest in order to win prize money.... I do believe that, while however well-intentioned it may be, it absolutely misses the mark of dealing with the issues, which is really that housing issues within First Nations communities, they're at a crisis point.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I noted how much the member knows about where the money is needed in her own municipality, and the same is true for some of the other members who have spoken.

If the government really wants to make inroads on affordable housing and the homelessness issue, it should consult members of Parliament and give the money to the municipalities, because they obviously know exactly where it needs to go.

Would the member comment on that?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, we absolutely want to be invited when government members come to our communities. That would be fantastic.

An interesting piece that has not been a big part of this conversation is the problems that rural areas in particular face. They are not inside a municipal structure, so they do not have that direct link to money. On east Vancouver Island, because of the expropriation of land to build the railway, there is very little public land available.

I want to flag something that I heard from my colleague Howard Houle, the regional director of the Regional District of Nanaimo. He said that the RDN was developing a program they hoped to get assent for, so they could basically create a housing authority within this unincorporated regional government. It could help community organizations facilitate land donations and then the management of housing agreements to ensure that the people who need the housing the most are the ones who get it. If you're outside of municipal structure, you've got a particular challenge and we hope that the voters locally will accede to that and very much bear in mind the need to elect councils and rural regional directors who will say yes to zoning applications in partnership with provincial and federal governments.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, the member for Sarnia—Lambton has stood up several times now and said that no money is being spent in her riding. I just want to assure her that it is. In fact, there is $7.2 million spent at the following addresses: 369 Tank Street in Petrolia and 747 Copland Road in Sarnia. Additional dollars are being spent at 16 Watt Street in Forest, Ontario; 1212 Michigan Avenue in Sarnia; 1625 Afton, Sarnia; 115 Victoria Street, Sarnia; 911 Wellington Street, Sarnia; 2444 Jane Street in Brigden, Ontario; 4335 Petrolia Street in Petrolia, Ontario—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Thank you very much. I want to allow the member to respond. I just want the parliamentary secretary to know that the questions are to the NDP member, and I want to give her an opportunity to respond.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, if the member opposite has a similar list for my riding, I would love to see it, because we do not get informed by the government and do not get invited. This is a nonpartisan issue. We need to work together to house those most deeply in need.

I wonder if there is anyone on the government side who would like to work with the people elected by the locals. I am sure we would all do better if we coordinated and communicated together. So far that has not happened.

● (1245)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to contribute to this debate.

One of the most telling observations today was the first statement of the parliamentary secretary when he said there had been about 25 years of federal absence. I was here when Paul Martin cancelled federal housing and when the Liberals resisted time after time. The parliamentary secretary was correct that Paul Martin's administration, and even the Jean Chrétien administration, was the one that crumbled away a national housing strategy. They drove the distance between the provinces and municipalities and the federal government to be proactive, to build on our success and to ensure the existing housing stocks would remain viable for the future and that new ones would meet the demand to provide homes for the safety, education and quality of life for so many people today.

We are in a major catch-up scenario because of the 25 years the parliamentary secretary rightly described in his opening statement today. He is absolutely correct to point out where it belongs: the Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien administrations not doing the work needed. They were forewarned time after time by the New Democrats and others in the chamber. Each of their governments slashed social services. At the same time, there were massive corporate tax cuts for insurance industries, oil and gas companies and a series of others that made record profits.

Social investment today will give us a stronger economy and will deal with some of the humanity issues we face, such as an opioid crisis and other emerging trends. A safe roof over the heads of people and their families is so important to achieve. That is echoed across the country.

It is also important to note in the motion the role of the private sector. There are a number of different options available for us in the private sector. However, the government continues to make decisions that erode housing options.

The area I represent has one of the highest rates of child poverty. Most recently, not only have we been waiting for investments for federal housing, but there has been an order in council from the government, the cabinet, to eliminate housing from our market. I will get back to that in a second.

I represent the town of Sandwich, the oldest European settlement west of Montreal, where the war of 1812 was fought and where the underground railroad was located. Today, it also has one of the highest rates of poverty. It is an area challenged with immigration supports to ensure people get back to school. There are single one-parent families. It is recognized, even through third-party reports, as being one of the most challenged in the nation, most recently by Campaign 2000 to end child poverty. The riding-by-riding analysis shows, sadly, that we are just outside the top 10.

This area has one-third of Canada's daily trade to the United States? What did the government do? It gave a private American billionaire, Matty Moroun, who has his tentacles through the history of the Liberal Party, permission to build a new bridge and, at the same time, to demolish single-family and multiplex homes for affordable housing, which they bought. If that was not bad enough, the repercussions were already being felt because they bought these homes and boarded the doors and windows. We lost schools, mostly Forster High School. We lost the post office, which was the longest-standing post office in Canada, from the 1800s, at one point delivering mail by horse and carriage. We lost places of worship and businesses.

● (1250)

For those who are not familiar with an order in council, it is essentially a decree from prime ministers and their cabinets that avoids all scrutiny, that is the will of them in their moment, that they know everything and that they issue that law, have privilege, the right without coming through the chamber or even the unelected chamber.

The Liberals gave this billionaire, an American who was sentenced to prison because of his conduct in the U.S., the keys and the process to continue to have homes boarded and locked up, Now he wants to do that to another 30-40 homes. The situation has become so grave that he has decided to erect lawn signs on these properties, calling for their demolition. He had the green light, the special permission and the privileged access from the government to do another border crossing without any terms or conditions. There are not even any terms for community benefits. Ironically the Liberals voted for its private member's motion to do a community benefit project. They ignored advice from their members. I think the motion is buried in some committee somewhere, but it has not seen the light of the day here. It is just another Liberal motion that has gone to another place, probably to show they did something during their four year tenure. We have not seen it come back here.

What is happening right now? We have another war on the city streets of Windsor at a time when housing is at a crisis point.

Although Windsor has had the blessing of lower housing prices than other places and affordable housing has been attainable to a certain level, that has shifted radically in the last five years. Hundreds now are without proper accommodation. The market is increasing. More people are flocking to the city. We have issues over opioids and other social problems, which are multiplying. The perfect storm is taking place at this point in time and more and more people than ever before do not have a place for their families at the end of the day.

The Liberals are very cognizant of this and of their partner, who is destroying these homes and asking for more homes to be destroyed, and we have seen no action.

In the motion is the notation of the private sector. It is the government's responsibility, with its partners, including the Ambassador Bridge and the project that will proceed based on the order in council from the Prime Minister and his cabinet, including the minister responsible for today's debate, to do something about the fact that their actions are eliminating affordable home options in my community.

We literally have single family homes, or duplexes or quadplexes that could provide a safe place for parents and their children. The economic basis for a community to survive is being shut down because of Liberal policies, lack of accountability and the mere fact that the Liberals' promises are nothing less than the broken words.

● (1255)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite raises a critical question and it relates to the right to housing in the human rights framework that we will move forward with to deal with one of the most pressing issues in the country today, which is the economic displacement of low-income communities. It is a real challenge. Some call it gentrification, but there are other issues attached to it. I look forward to the member supporting us as we build into the national housing program a way to protect those communities that get economically displaced by economic forces beyond their control.

The member talks, with disappointment, about the fact that we have spent $5.8 billion in our first year and $6.3 billion in our second year. Is the member aware that the platform he ran on promised to spend $2.89 billion new over four years, $2 billion of which was the housing renewals, which we have already done and is not even part of the figures I mentioned. In other words, only $700 million for homelessness. Would he rather we kept his promise or fulfill our mandate to build housing, which is way more than $700 million, the paltry sum he promised Canadians when he stood for election?

Mr. Brian Masse: What a sad question, Madam Speaker. He should go back to his own comments, his own words about 25 years of being absent, including his former mentors Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien and the cast of characters we had in here who denied the fact that there was a problem in Canada. I am glad the member has owned up to that 25 years of absence. That party could take action now to make up for those 25 years.

It reminds me of a quote, "Promises are worse than lies because you make others hope for something that you're not going to do." That should be the Liberal credo.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned that this motion includes the private sector, given the fact that the preamble talks about the private sector. He mentioned the private sector twice in his speech. However, there is nothing in the motion that talks about incentives to get the private sector involved or reducing red tape to allow the private sector to do its job or reducing development fees.

There are many communities in which the private sector is eager to partner, but the current government is adding continuing red tape and increasing taxes, making us far less competitive. Therefore, plumbers, electricians and all of the people who are able to provide private sector housing are not able to keep their jobs.

I would encourage my colleague to include the private sector and some ideas as to how the private sector could actually be a part of the solution. No one is suggesting the private sector is going to solve all the problems, but it is a great partner that we should be incorporating into our plan.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, in fact, a lot of models were very important to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and involved the private sector. The member knows the Conservative Party did not use this excellent asset. In fact drove a wedge between it for some of its good work being done under the Harper administration. That is the reality.

Perhaps we can see a re-emergence of CMHC as part of a proactive approach to including the private sector to accomplish some of those goals. Sustainable and regular funding as well is very important for the private sector, so it knows that its projects will be viable, as they are amortized over a series of years. There are plenty of ways the private sector can be brought in to do this.

It also about job creation and other programs we can do for carpentry and for home building. A lot of the programs and services, which have been cancelled in the past, like the retrofit program the Conservatives cancelled, were very good for local employment and development. They lowered costs for people, saved with energy efficiency, put more money back into people's pockets and employed a lot of local people. Therefore, the re-emergence of those programs in connection with the national housing program is a good way to put people to work and put roofs over people's heads.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, in response to the speech given by a member who proudly represents his constituents and who told us that some of them were displaced because of the construction of a bridge by a private U.S. company, a bridge that has yet to be built, the Liberals decided to revisit the 2015 campaign and events that occurred in 2004. For those watching at home, I would say that it was the perfect illustration of how the Liberals perceive the housing debate.

Can my colleague, who has been here a long time, tell us what the consequences are of saying one thing and doing the opposite?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, this is an important point. It is the missed opportunities of our country, the mediocrity and malaise from the government. The problem is that the Liberals are saying it, but they do not really mean it. They do not put the necessary hard work behind it. The example I provided with the Ambassador Bridge is a classic example of the fact that their actions have consequences. Housing was eliminated because they would not do the hard work that was necessary.

● (1300)

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I will inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

It is my pleasure to rise today to take part in the opposition day debate on housing. It is not often that an opposition party gives the government a chance to talk about all its achievements, but thanks to the member for Saskatoon West, we are doing that today.

I am not just going to speak about our record on housing. I am going to talk about what we have done for seniors, for people living with disabilities and for vulnerable Canadians. Most of all, I am going to speak about what we are doing in the fight against poverty, because that is at the core of this opposition day motion. What is the government doing to fight poverty in Canada? The answer to that question is simple: We are doing more than any government has done in generations.

I will start with seniors. We all know that Canada's population is aging. However one looks at it, Canadians are living healthier, longer lives, and with these demographic changes, our country will have both challenges and opportunities. Our government recognizes this, which is why a key focus since taking office has been improving the quality of life for an aging population.

We increased the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors, improving financial security for almost 900,000 seniors and helping to lift thousands of seniors out of poverty. We enhanced the Canada pension plan for the first time in a generation, which will help the seniors of tomorrow with increased retirement benefits, particularly for disabled contributors, widows and widowers. Indeed, in my riding, I cannot tell members how many seniors have come in who are trying to survive on the Canada pension plan, the OAS and the GIS. They struggle. This is a huge accomplishment. Of course, we reversed the Harper government's disastrous changes to OAS and GIS eligibility, restoring the age from 67 back to 65, which will prevent 100,000 seniors from falling into poverty every year.

Let us talk about what our government is doing to promote accessibility and help Canadians living with disabilities. Today, one in seven Canadians reports having a disability, and disability continues to be the most common ground for discrimination complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. That is why our goal is to make a barrier-free Canada a reality within the federal jurisdiction and why, last June, we tabled Bill C-81, Canada's first-ever national accessibility legislation. Thanks to the accessibility act, our government is taking a proactive approach to get ahead of systemic discrimination across all areas of federal jurisdiction to achieve the progressive realization of a Canada without barriers.

We are also putting money where it matters through programs such as the enabling accessibility fund and the social development partnership program. Initiatives like these support community-based projects across Canada aimed at improving accessibility and safety within communities and workplaces. They get us closer to a barrier-free Canada, where people with disabilities can have a real opportunity to succeed.

We can talk about housing. Our government is proud to have announced Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, our 10-year, $40-billion plan to give more Canadians a place to call home. Thanks to the national housing strategy, we are going to create 100,000 new housing units and repair and renew more than 300,000 housing units. We are going to reduce or eliminate housing needs for 530,000 Canadian families across Canada. We are going to protect an additional 385,000 households from losing an affordable place to live. We are going to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% by 2027–28.

● (1305)

It is important to note, however, that our commitment to make sure that Canadians have access to safe, affordable homes runs deeper than the national housing strategy. From the beginning of our mandate, we have been making unprecedented investments in housing. These investments are already paying off. Whether it is eliminating chronic homelessness in Victoria, funding new community housing projects in Calgary or Kitchener, or funding seniors in supportive housing units in St. John's, all across Canada we are helping to create homes for people who need them the most. In fact, since forming government in 2015, we have invested nearly $5 billion in housing, which has benefited nearly one million Canadians from coast to coast to coast. By comparison, the party that initiated today's debate promised less than $3 billion over four years for housing, and those commitments were conditional on first balancing the budget.

Our government understood from day one that meeting Canada's housing challenges could not wait, which is why we have invested from the beginning of our mandate and why we have committed to providing stable, long-term funding to our partners for the next decade. This will bring certainty for our partners over the next decade so that they can plan and start to look forward as to how they can help resolve some of these issues.

Let us talk about poverty. As we outlined recently in opportunity for all, which is Canada's first-ever national poverty reduction strategy, and there seem to be a lot firsts coming along here, our government has a plan to achieve the lowest level of poverty in Canada's history by 2030. That is millions of people removed from poverty. We are also going to establish the first-ever official poverty line so that we can accurately measure how we are doing in the fight against poverty rather than leaving it up to the government of the day to set its own definitions.

In the committee I sit on, I asked all the witnesses about data. We need that data. We need to understand the baseline. How are we doing compared to where we were? How are we doing in meeting our future goals? That is critically important in executing any operational plan.

Once again, we understand that the fight against poverty is not something that can wait, which is why we have invested heavily in that fight since we took office. To date, we have invested more than $22 billion in the fight against poverty. I am proud to say that those investments are paying off. Thanks to the Canada child benefit, enhanced seniors benefits, and starting next year, the Canada workers benefit, by April 2019, we will have lifted more than 650,000 Canadians out of poverty, including more than 300,000 children. This is an incredible achievement and something we are very proud of.

Our government understands that there is still more work to do. The Prime Minister likes to say, "better is always possible." However we look at it, by whatever measure we use, we are making real change happen. We were elected to help Canadians in the middle class and those working hard to join it, and through unprecedented investments in housing, seniors, and the fight against poverty, our government is making it possible for more and more Canadians to have a real and fair chance at success.

I would like to add that in my riding, we see these issues being played out every single day. I have sat in on countless round tables and town halls. I have been in some of these consultations with our colleagues. What we have heard and what we are putting down as a plan is what the experts have been telling us we need. We do not need a knee-jerk reaction. We need to have a long-term plan that we can count on so that we can effectively move forward over the next decade.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, while the hon. member is patting himself on the back, homelessness has tripled in Port Alberni in two years under the Liberals' watch. We do not need to talk about campaign promises in 2015. We need to talk about people today. That is our job. That is why we are here in the House. It is to help people right now.

More and more people are ending up on the street. Our economy is struggling. As the member knows, small businesses are struggling to find employees. The Liberals have rolled out a strategy, but the member is talking about 2027-28. Imagine being on the street right now, and for 50% of the people, they are promising to make sure that they are not homeless. That number is skyrocketing. This does not make sense to the person on the street or to our communities.

What we are asking is that the government immediately roll out half the national strategy now. It is needed now. There is urgency now. The Province of B.C. understands it. It is doing it. Why can the Liberal government not do it?

● (1310)

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Madam Speaker, we have doubled our investment to $200 million. We can look at the things we have done and the investments we have made to date, This is not a problem that happened overnight. When we look at the past, it did not happen overnight. There has to be a plan to move forward, and this is our plan that will take us where we need to go. We are investing money.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member for Courtenay—Alberni that he had an opportunity to ask the question without being interrupted, and he should provide that respect to the person who is responding, even though he may not like that response.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was able to hear some of my colleague's speech, and I heard a lot about chronic homelessness. We know that there are multiple reasons for homelessness. There are factors such as mental health, addictions, English as a second language for newcomers to Canada, and the lack of jobs. The economy has a hand in this, surprisingly.

I would like to ask my colleague what kind of tangible change is going to be reached by just throwing billions or millions of dollars at homelessness. How are we going to actually impact people and their mental health or English as a second language? How does the government plan to achieve that?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Madam Speaker, when I started my intervention, I did not start by talking about housing. I started by talking about poverty, because poverty is at the core of all this. When we talk about poverty, we include mental health, because that is an issue. We see mental health issues in my riding. We see drug addiction issues. We see these types of issues all across the nation. There is a big debate: housing first or treatment? We cannot have one without the other. That is the problem.

The previous government rolled everything into a $120-million housing first program. That is not enough when it cut off housing shelters, shelters for youth and shelters for vulnerable women. It is not enough. That is why our plan is directed toward poverty and helping those who need it the most move forward. It is not just housing. It is all the elements that go together to solve the problem.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, one thing we have talked about is investments. If the government is talking about investments, why is the money not on the table right now, and why is the money the Liberals say they are putting into all these programs not rolling out as they say?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Madam Speaker, when it comes right down to it, we have partners. We need to be able to work with our partners, and our partners have to be ready and willing to move forward.

● (1315)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am truly very pleased to speak to the motion by the hon. member for Carleton.

Canadians believe that the spending the member considers to be reckless actually represents wise strategic investments that will stimulate Canada's economy and create strong and inclusive communities.

For example, our commitment to spend more than $11 billion on new investments in housing was the largest item in the 2017 budget.

Access to safe and affordable housing is a key issue in practically every riding in the country, including Carleton and, of course, mine, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. I am pleased to say that the government has shown unprecedented leadership on this file, which is so important for the health and well-being of Canadian families.

I would especially like to point out that the government went to great lengths last year to consult Canadians on how to improve housing outcomes for everyone. The minister visited my riding together with representatives of affordable housing advocacy groups and associations. He took the time to consult the people in my riding. This was a commitment we made in budget 2016 in order to identify innovative ideas that could be included in Canada's first ever national housing strategy.

At the end of June 2016, a national conversation on housing was launched at the end of a productive meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for housing. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the CMHC, led consultations entitled "Let's Talk Housing" for four months.

Between June 28 and October 21, 2018, the CMHC and the provincial, territorial, and municipal governments held a number of consultation activities on Canada's national housing strategy. The consultations included online initiatives and live events organized in cities and regions of Canada, during which time a tremendous amount of information was gathered. The opinions, ideas, and points of view of thousands of Canadians and dozens of interested organizations were gathered and recorded.

The consultations had three objectives. First, we wanted to encourage Canadians to actively reflect on the issue of housing, what it means to our communities, and to talk about it. We did that in spades.

Second, Canadians were invited to share their points of view on a long-term vision for housing in Canada. They were also invited to identify themes and significant results related to housing, and to find innovative solutions and approaches to housing. That was also definitely accomplished.

The third purpose of the consultations was to help develop a national housing strategy, which I will get to in a few minutes.

I would like to take this opportunity to summarize some of the engagement activities that took place last summer and early autumn.

Online activities included a CMHC social media campaign called Let's Talk Housing to promote the consultations. Canadians shared more than 1,900 ideas via social media. The campaign was so innovative and effective that it won two MarCom platinum awards from the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals. The CMHC also won four gold awards in various video categories and honourable mentions in a number of website categories for its "Let's Talk Housing" consultations.

Over 6,300 Canadians also took the time to participate in a nationwide survey on the national housing strategy through the "Let's Talk Housing" website. Over 130 ideas were submitted on the CMHC's idea sharing platform, and over 475 online written submissions were received from individuals and organizations such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the National Housing Collaborative.

The CMHC also organized a total of 22 roundtables to gather input from experts and advocates on Canada's national housing strategy.

● (1320)

Furthermore, 21 focus groups were held with vulnerable populations, including people with lived experience of homelessness, recent immigrants, low-income Canadians, and people with disabilities, to give people who face daily housing challenges a chance to participate in the development of the national housing strategy. This was a worthwhile initiative.

We also conducted public surveys, and some MPs organized town halls in their ridings. I also want to mention that all MPs received information and materials to help them communicate with their constituents. We reached out to indigenous peoples, who often experience some of the harshest living conditions in Canada. CMHC hosted round tables with housing experts on indigenous housing in rural, remote and urban areas, as well as on northern housing.

Meetings were held with national indigenous organizations, and we supported their own consultation forums. The result of all these efforts was a report entitled "What We Heard", which was released by the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development in a Facebook event on National Housing Day, November 22, 2016. I urge all MPs to visit the website letstalkhousing.ca and to read the "What We Heard" report.

For now, I would like to say that a clear and common message came from the consultations, and that is that Canadians want better results when it comes to housing for people in need. Some clear themes also emerged during the consultations. For example, Canadians and housing stakeholders believe that the national housing strategy should encompass the full spectrum of housing while giving priority to those who are most in need. Housing must be incorporated into the other support services that vulnerable people may need. Housing providers need better access to capital to make it easier for them to build more affordable housing units. What is more, most participants favoured policies that enable local communities to propose solutions to housing problems.

More specifically, Canadians want their national housing strategy to reduce or eliminate homelessness in Canada. My riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles covers Deux-Montagnes, Saint-Eustache, Boisbriand and Rosemère, which are northern suburbs of Montreal. We have shelters to help homeless people there. Homelessness is not just a problem in urban areas. It is also a problem in the suburbs. Unfortunately, homelessness is a daily reality for some people in my riding. Shockingly, nearly 1,000 people access homeless shelters there every year.

I want to come back to what Canadians want from their housing strategy. They want priority to be given to the housing needs of low-income and vulnerable people. They also want the strategy to address the unique challenges faced by indigenous communities and the growing housing affordability issues faced by lower and middle-income Canadians, particularly in our larger cities. They want a strategy that will forge inclusive, sustainable communities and that will ensure that our social housing sector remains strong.

Those who took part in the consultations did more than just identify problems. They also identified options, proposed innovative solutions and helped focus on measurable results. All of this information and these perspectives will be taken into account when the government finalizes the national housing strategy's key initiatives.

As the minister said, the purpose of the national housing strategy is not to duplicate or replace existing provincial, territorial or municipal housing plans or strategies. Rather, its purpose will be to better coordinate the efforts of everyone involved, including governments, housing stakeholders, and indigenous and other organizations. We must work together on a common vision and results in a spirit of mutual respect.

First of all, we are taking a whole-of-government approach with the national housing strategy in order to look at housing in a global context and support the social and economic advancement of individuals and families. In addition, in partnership with the provinces and territories, we are working toward implementing a national strategy that takes regional housing needs into account and respects individual jurisdictions.

Key stakeholders have shown strong support for what we are doing with our national housing strategy and the direction we are taking. In my riding, for example, representatives are very pleased with the strategy.

● (1325)

In closing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member is out of time. Perhaps she will have an opportunity to finish her remarks as she answers questions.

I now recognize the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, while I hate to contradict my colleague opposite, who says the government is doing a lot to support housing, a report by an organization called Generation Squeeze indicates that, relative to young people in 1976, it takes two to four times longer for today's youth to save up the 20% down payment needed to buy their first home.

It is therefore much harder for today's youth to get into their first home and start building their lives, especially when they graduate with student debt. This is not to mention the mortgage rates that are two to four times higher in some regions of Canada, which makes it even harder.

My colleague claims that all organizations in Quebec are pleased, but the Regroupement des comités logement et associations de locataires du Québec has sharply criticized the national housing strategy:

> The federal government's commitment to invest large sums ($2 billion from the federal government and as much from the provinces) in a Canada housing benefit—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I have to make sure there is time for other questions, so I will let the member respond.

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, but I am afraid she is wrong. People in my riding, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, met with the Minister of Families, and when they took a look at the national housing strategy, they were very pleased.

In answer to the member's specific question about purchasing a first home or property, what I can say is that, since coming to power in 2015, we have made unprecedented investments in community housing. Sadly, too many Canadians are homeless, but we have helped them and we have created more affordable housing units.

If young people have access to safe, affordable housing, they will be on their way to becoming property owners.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are trying to take credit for this major national housing strategy, but as the first part of this motion points out, it is over 10 years. It is fine to promise something in 10 years.

My colleague and members on that side often talk about the middle class and those working hard to join it. What the middle class and those working hard to join it need are good jobs. The government's policies on economics, from failing to negotiate NAFTA and increasing tariffs, to failing to give the green light to Trans Mountain and energy east, all of which are negative factors on our economy, are driving away jobs. The jobs are going to the U.S. I met with a number of people in my riding this summer, small business owners, and many of them are actually talking about relocating to the U.S. and taking their jobs with them.

How can my colleague say they are addressing the housing problem when people cannot even get a job in the first place to be able to afford a house?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Earlier, you were talking about the middle class and those who want to join it. That is exactly—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would remind the member to address her remarks to the Chair.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, my colleague opposite was talking about people who want to join the middle class. Since we have been in power, 500,000 jobs have been created. Unemployment is at its lowest rate in 40 years. There are definitely jobs to be had. Furthermore, the national housing strategy we created is designed to make sure everyone has safe, affordable housing.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

As always, it is a great honour to stand in this House on behalf of the wonderful people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and talk about an issue that is very near and dear to my heart, but that is also consistently one of the top issues that is raised by people where I live.

I got into politics because of the work I used to do as a former caseworker for former member of Parliament Jean Crowder. I worked in her office for seven years and really got to see how the policies and legislation that were enacted in this place affected the people on the ground. There were far too many occasions when I was sitting across the table with tearful constituents who were at the end of their rope because they were having to make a decision about whether they could pay the rent or put good quality food on the table. In a country as wealthy as ours, that is a shameful thing that it is still going on today. These are problems I was dealing with in the last decade. They are still going on and it is 2018.

We have this motion today because we have this sense of urgency. This was an urgent issue 10 years ago and it was an urgent issue in 2015 when the Liberals won the election. However, there has been a delay, and we have not seen the action live up to that urgency. As members of Parliament, we all have those stories. We all have to sit in our constituency offices and try to explain why we are not doing enough to meet it. Therefore, let us look at the motion before us, because it has two very important constituent parts.

One part is going to call upon the House to recognize the right to housing as a human right. Right away I want to acknowledge the hard work of my friend and colleague the member for North Island—Powell River and her attempt earlier in this Parliament to put that into law through Bill C-325, which was unfortunately voted down by the Liberals. That bill would have basically enshrined the right to housing in the Canadian Bill of Rights. I know the Liberals at the time criticized it. They said that using a legal avenue, a rights-based approach, would not be effective. I think members were saying that we need to have a plan. The point they were missing is that when people have a legal avenue, that is how they hold their government to account. When they have a legal avenue they can go to the courts, they can make sure that not only the legislature but the executive branch is actually living up to that legal obligation. I know it is not the only answer. However, it certainly is a very important constituent part of the issue that we are trying to deal with today.

The second part, which is probably the critical part of the motion, is that we want the current government to bring its funding commitment forward and spend it before the 2019 election.

The Liberals are absolute masters of the long promise. They will announce something that is usually made up of previously announced funding, it is grossly inflated to include both territorial and provincial funding announcements, and when we look at the fine print we see that it is spread out over a whole bunch of years and the funding is not going to come into effect in a big way until after the next election. Yes, the national housing strategy was rolled out with great fanfare. However, when we look at the budgetary numbers, it is all back-ended to fiscal year 2019-20 and beyond, so we have to wait until the next Parliament. Although there is federal money being spent now, it is nowhere near enough to acknowledge the crisis that exists on the ground. Therefore, what we are calling on the government to do is to move the spending up, treat this like the crisis it is and get those units built.

I want to talk about some of the amazing local initiatives that are going on. In the absence of this critically needed federal funding or the fact we have to wait for it, I look at associations like the M'akola Housing Society and the Cowichan Housing Association, that are really trying to lead with local efforts to get the ball rolling. In fact, where I live in the Cowichan region, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, we are going into municipal elections this fall and we will have an important referendum question on whether we are going to allocate some funding to the Cowichan Housing Association so that it can start taking firm action.

● (1330)

I am really heartened by the incredible work being done by constituents in my riding. They have seized the issue. They have done homeless counts. There is also that part of the housing crisis that is frequently not talked about which is housing insecurity, people who are one paycheque away from being evicted, have threats from their landlords or are couch surfing. It is a big issue.

I do not want to prejudge what the referendum question is going to be, but I hope that the voters in Cowichan Valley look at this question, treat it with the seriousness that it deserves and try to recognize the local efforts being made on this issue.

The Liberals in questions and comments are going to come up with all kinds of facts and figures and say they really are doing something, but the really bad thing is that the government is prepared to spend $4.5 billion of taxpayers' money on an old pipeline to deliver diluted bitumen to our coast, something that flies in the face of our climate change commitment. Furthermore, the Liberals want to expand the export of diluted bitumen. It just makes an absolute mockery of our climate change commitments.

The Liberals can find that kind of money pretty quickly and easily, but I am left trying to explain to my six-year-old kids, whose future we are trying to work on in this place, what the current government is doing and try to put that in the context of the housing crisis we are having.

It is always very helpful in this place when we are talking about particular issues to bring in personal stories because that is ultimately why we are here. I want to talk about a couple of constituents who wrote to me and gave me permission to use their names and talk about some of the things they are going through.

I would like to talk about Wilfred Stevens. He is a single father who can barely make ends meet because he is trying to prove that he is the primary caregiver to his children. He has been struggling to get the child tax benefit and all of this financial difficulty is not allowing him to have that kind of security in making his rental payments.

There is a woman named June Thomas in my riding who has been waiting for quite a long time to get her GIS application processed. She is currently couch surfing, at her age, in different family members' homes to try and make ends meet. It is absolutely unacceptable that our seniors, the people who in previous generations and previous decades built this country to what it is today, are still having to live in such abject poverty and trying to find a place to live, one of the most basic human needs.

Peter Emeny-Smith is having problems with the CRA and so on. These are all issues that relate to people's ability to find housing and when they do not have that kind of security it affects their entire life, their outlook on life, the way they are able to function in society, their ability to hold down a job. That kind of stress wears people down and it can lead to further costs down the road in their mental health and their physical health, so there are real tangible economic costs to not solving the housing crisis. Maybe my Conservative friends will argue that it is too costly a venture. I would argue that it is too costly not to do things.

Given that my time is running out, I will end by saying that I recognize how critical this issue is. I am going to be hosting two town halls on housing during the October constituency week to try to juxtapose what the traditional federal role used to be in housing with what it is now, and what more we could be doing from the senior level of government.

I hope all hon. members will look at the spirit and intent behind this motion, recognize its urgency and support us in addressing this very critical issue.

● (1335)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite's commitment and comprehension of the seriousness of the issue, the value of investing in housing and the transformational impact on people's lives is exactly why we have invested in the national housing strategy.

I would like to follow up on the two cases he referenced, because those are also within the ministry in which I work and would be more than happy to help those individuals obtain the benefits they are entitled to.

In terms of what he can say to a six-year-old, in our first two years in office, we spent three times more on housing than we spent on the acquisition of the Trans Mountain pipeline. In fact, there is close to $12.6 billion in new spending. That is not part of the $40 billion for the national housing strategy, but that is the down payment we made to get into the national housing strategy. I would also like to say that over the next 10 years, we will be spending close to 10 times more than we spent on TMX. The member can rest assured that our investment in housing is by magnitudes of tens of billions of dollars more, much more than anything we have spent on that one particular project.

My question for the member opposite is this. In the Nanaimo area, the following projects have been invested in, built and created in the last two years. There is one at 312 Hirst Avenue, another one at 940 Hectate Street, another at the non-profit on-reserve site of the Tseshaht First Nation, one at the North Cowichan first nation with the Penelakut tribe, one in Tofino, an additional investment in the reserve at Tseshaht. It goes on. There is another one at Malahat, an additional investment of $960,000 at Oyster Bay, an additional investment in Nanaimo—Alberni at Marktosis. There is about $18 million in investment into the area that he represents. Which one of those projects is his favourite and how does he explain the joy of seeing it to his children?

● (1340)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I think I need to provide my friend and colleague with a map of Vancouver Island showing the electoral areas, because then he would realize that Nanaimo is, in fact, not in my riding. That is a bit of an oops.

I love the Library of Parliament because when one submits a question, one gets a clear and concise answer. I am holding in my hand right now a response from the Library of Parliament that says there are zero dollars announced or committed in the riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for revealing what most of us on this side of the House are aware of: that zero dollars have been spent.

The propensity of the government to predict spending in the future is, in my mind, wishful thinking, because it does not even know if it is going to be here in 10 years. I wonder if the member feels the same way.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I did not hear the full question. I think it was about wishful thinking by the Liberals. Yes, I referenced in my speech that they are masters of the long promise and a lot of what they announce is kind of predicated on re-electing a Liberal government. They like to package these things up, bring them to the electorates and make it seem like they are actually doing work, but when we get down to the fine print, we can expose the inaction for what it really and truly is. We see that on their environmental commitments and housing.

I really hope the Liberals understand the intent behind this motion, which is that we are seeking to have the funding allocated in later years spent now, because here and now is the crisis, and here and now is when the money needs to be spent.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked very briefly about seniors. I realize we all have issues in our own ridings. Likewise in my riding, with the demise of the oil industry, there are a lot of seniors who own homes that they cannot get rid of, and that is their retirement. Short of them investing their money on cruise ships to travel around the world, they are not going to have homes to live in because the market has died.

Does the member not believe that this motion would be better if it had something about the economy in it to create the jobs that the Liberal government is not investing in?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, the intent behind the motion is pretty broad. It is trying to get the government to specifically act on something right here and now.

The member's comments about seniors, however, are very welcome. Many seniors are on fixed incomes. They are very much the most vulnerable members of our society. They are less able to adjust to economic shocks, which is why we have to pay particular attention to them when we are designing policy in this area.

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to talk about housing today since my riding, which is quite rural, has had critical housing needs for years.

In a number of communities, no social housing has been built since the end of the 1980s. Absolutely nothing has changed. Most of the existing housing is dwellings for people 55 and older, single people or older couples. In most small towns, the only affordable housing available is for seniors. There is nothing for families.

There are urban centres in the various RCMs of my riding that have benefited from some projects, but when I talk to mayors of those municipalities, they tell me that it is extremely difficult to get such projects off the ground because of all the requirements that need to be met. They tell me that sometimes it is so discouraging that they just feel like giving up.

Often the administrative requirements for social housing projects are exactly the same in rural areas regardless of the size of the projects. Whether we are talking about 200 dwellings in downtown Montreal or four dwellings in a small town like La Reine, Dupuy, or Saint Vital, the same requirements need to be met. Moreover, it often takes at least 24 dwellings to be entitled to funding. A municipality with a population of 300 would need to build 24 social housing units, which costs a few million dollars, just to be eligible for funding, when that does not in any way correspond to the municipality's needs or reality.

As long as we are going to keep the same requirements for everyone and not take into account Canada's demographic diversity, we are necessarily depriving several rural communities from funding for social housing. They are, however, the ones who need social housing the most since quite often they do not qualify for funding.

Furthermore, administrative requirements often push up the cost of a project, since the administrative fees to develop specifications, for example, are the same whether the project is to build four housing units or 24. When the cost has to be spread over just four units, the project can become very costly, because administrative requirements do not vary based on the project scope.

In addition, when the time comes to put together a project, it costs a lot of money to compile all the specifications and expert opinions needed to meet the standards, and that is without even knowing whether the funding will be granted. This represents a higher financial risk for municipalities. When a municipality spends $100,000 of its $800,000 budget, which is supposed to cover all municipal services, on a project that it cannot even be certain will be completed successfully, it is taking a massive financial risk. Large municipalities, in contrast, have multiple pending projects that they can put into a drawer, and when programs are announced, all they have to do is open the drawer and pick out the ones they want to submit. Everything has already been done.

Moreover, let us not forget that small communities do not have the same municipal resources as big cities. Cities have an engineering department, architects, urban planners and other professionals already working for them. In contrast, small municipalities have a town manager, a municipal secretary who rarely works full time, a municipal inspector and a day labourer to do all the snow clearing, lawn mowing and other maintenance. That is basically the entire team they have at their disposal.

Therefore, when the time comes to put together a social housing project and commission all these specifications, they have no choice but to turn to the private sector for their architect's drawings and engineering studies. This is extremely costly for them. They have no in-house resources to rely on.

● (1350)

It is important to understand what a challenge that is. At some point, the government will have to come up with a way to set requirements and manage projects at the administrative level in a way that takes into account the scope of the projects and the size of small municipalities.

In order to prevent big cities from always getting all the projects, it is important for a portion of the funding to be reserved for projects in municipalities with a population of less than 3,000. There must be funding set aside so that all of the money does not get taken by others. Otherwise, nothing will get built.

Many small municipalities are really frustrated. They need housing, but they do not know how to compete. The government has announced a lot of money for social housing, but we never know when it will be spent. We have just learned that 90% of the budget will be spent after the next election. Small municipalities that want to undertake a project will have to spend a lot of money planning it, without knowing whether this government will be re-elected. All that work might be for nothing if there is no funding available when it is time to carry out the project. This is a truly unacceptable way of managing things.

If the government is going to announce funding for housing, it should make the money available now. It should say that *x* amount of money is available and that there is a three-year window for submitting projects.

What it is doing right now is nothing but smoke and mirrors. The government is giving hope to people who may want to start projects, but we do not know what will happen. The election is an unknown quantity, so we cannot predict what will happen in two or three years. Who knows, maybe in two or three years, the government will announce that, just like electoral reform, the whole thing is too complicated, there are problems, we will have to wait again, yada yada yada.

Meanwhile, people continue to live in poverty and cannot get ahead. Children do not have access to anything, and their future will suffer. People are stuck in violent situations. In a number of indigenous communities, nothing has been built. In some cases, a woman experiencing domestic violence cannot just kick her husband out. If she were to do that, she would be kicking him out of the community because he would have nowhere else to live. Women are often too afraid because they say that they could not throw their husband into the street, since there are no other options. They end up giving in and staying in violent situations. The same goes if it is the woman who decides to leave, because the house is in her husband's name. She is not just leaving her home; she is leaving her community without knowing whether she will be able to find shelter elsewhere.

Housing is very expensive in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. There is a shortage of workers, and the housing shortage has been ongoing for 10 years. Nothing is happening. People are unable to pay their rent. They live in unhealthy conditions and are bullied by their landlords. People continue to believe that this is acceptable, that we can let people live like that and that these people are not important.

We have an opportunity to grow the rural economy in regions like mine. There is huge potential, but we are currently unable to grow this economy because we cannot house the people that could contribute to it. We cannot send workers there, even though there are jobs available and businesses are closing their doors because of the labour shortage. I find it difficult to understand how the government can say that they are going to invest this money in the next term of office when there are glaring needs now.

We know very well that the housing is not going to magically appear the moment the money is allocated. It has to be built, and we have to find the people to do it. Projects do not get built overnight.

Right now, what the government is doing is compromising the future childhoods of children who are yet to be born. In the small towns that I spoke about, the last time low-income housing units were built was when I was about five years old. The government is undermining these people's entire childhoods and teenage years. They will not see any investments in housing until they are grown up. I think that is unacceptable.

It is also important to understand that not having anywhere to live or spending 75% of one's income on housing causes a lot of other problems. It is unfortunate, but the adage about having to spend money to make money is true. If people are spending 75% of their income on housing, they will not have any money left over to pay for a car that will help them to earn a better salary and a better income. They need a car because they have no other way of getting to work.

● (1355)

There is no public transportation because there are not enough riders. It is extremely important to understand that housing is an immediate need, and I sincerely hope that the government will take into account my region's needs. It is high time that the members opposite woke up.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member opposite.

There are three very important points I want to make about Canada's national housing strategy.

[*English*]

First, the homelessness partnering strategy money has a new definition for rural homelessness. It is also enrolling new communities so we can move prevention upstream and into the rural communities from which much of the homelessness problem emanates.

Second, the co-investment fund does not require a set contribution from the province. It must involve the municipalities, but the municipalities are not required to provide matching dollars to receive these funds. They are simply there to tie them into municipal programs to make sure we get the housing built.

The final point, which I think is critical to this, is that the dollars that are set aside for this have already started to be spent. Twelve billion dollars have already been spent prior to the announcement of the national housing strategy. Our first two budgets pushed the housing strategy into communities right across the country, and the next 10 years adds on top of that. We have promised well more than $40 billion, and we have already spent well more than $12 billion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, no money was invested in Normétal, Saint-Lambert, La Reine, Dupuy, La Sarre, Clerval, Sainte-Hélène-de-Mancebourg, Palmarolle, Gallichan, Roquemaure, Rapide-Danseur, Duparquet, Poularies, Macamic, Authier, Chazel, Taschereau, or plenty of other places.

Nothing has been invested recently in Témiscamingue, Rémigny, Nédélec, Guérin, Notre-Dame-du-Nord, Angliers, Saint-Eugène-de-Guigues, Saint-Bruno-de-Guigues, Laverlochère, Fugèreville, Duhamel-Ouest, Lorrainville, Ville-Marie, Béarn, Saint-Edouard-de-Fabre, Temiscaming or Kipawa.

In eastern Quebec, not a cent was invested in Launay, Trécesson, Saint-Félix-de-Dalquier, Saint-Dominique-du-Rosaire, Landrienne, La Morandière, Rochebaucourt, Champneuf, Barraute or Belcourt.

I do not think I need to go on. I have made my point: nothing has been invested in small communities in my riding.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue will have three more minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on this motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

TORNADOES IN OTTAWA-GATINEAU

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last weekend was tragic and shocking for thousands of people in Ottawa, Dunrobin and Gatineau. As horrific as the tornadoes were, the one thing that came out of this natural disaster was the way in which neighbours, even strangers, came together as a community.

I want to thank the first responders; Hydro Ottawa and Hydro One staff, especially the linesmen; the fast-food workers and gas station employees; and all the people who went out of their way to check up on seniors, bring food and hot water to families with babies and deliver ice to help keep food and medicine refrigerated. This shows that in times of crisis, when our neighbours' lives are shattered by events beyond our control, our community comes together. I am incredibly proud of the people of our city.

If anyone wants to help, they should please consider making a donation to the Red Cross, the Salvation Army or the food bank. I thank all those who came forward in this time of need.

* * *

2018 INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, along with the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, I was able to attend the amazing International Plowing Match, held in Chatham-Kent this year. From the fantastic array of exhibits to the great farm displays and incredible entertainment, including Chatham's own Canadian Cowgirls, thousands of visitors from all over Ontario and beyond were able to experience good old-fashioned Kent County hospitality, as well as seeing first-hand why I call Kent County the Garden of Eden.

We had terrific weather. There was only one day of rain, but everyone pitched in to help navigate through the challenges a fall rainstorm can do to Dover clay. One thousand plus volunteers, including my wife Faye, worked for countless hours to plan and execute this successful event, which would never have happened without all of their efforts. I offer my congratulations to them all for making this year's International Plowing Match in Chatham-Kent such a great success.

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● (1400)

RUN SAGE CREEK

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, October 7, the Sage Creek community will hit the trails for its first annual Run Sage Creek. There will be a one-kilometre fun run for younger children, as well as three-kilometre and 10-kilometre run/walk options.

[*Translation*]

What a wonderful way to get people together and promote being active outdoors.

[*English*]

The organizing committee has been working hard since last year to put together this great event. They even organized a run club over the summer to help initiate adults and kids to the sport and get people active.

[*Translation*]

The main goal of the event is to get people to go outside and be active, but the Sage Creek community and the Sage Creek School parent council will also benefit from the funds raised.

[*English*]

I look forward to seeing everyone there. Registration closes on October 5, so people should sign up today.

[*Translation*]

I hope to see you at Sage Creek on October 7.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today New Democrats initiated debate on one of the most pressing issues facing Canadians: the need for decent, secure and affordable housing. Indeed, we face a crisis. Millions of Canadians are struggling to find appropriate housing for themselves and their families.

In every province, the dream of home ownership has been crushed for young couples. Renters cannot find affordable housing, and they face reno- and demoviction. Employers cannot attract the employees they need, small businesses are closing, and families are being separated as folks are forced to leave the communities they grew up in.

Despite their rhetoric, Liberals refuse to treat this as a crisis or provide meaningful relief now. The federal government must re-enter the housing file and finance projects directly. We need to build co-ops and affordable homes of all types, create incentives for rental stock, and curb offshore capital that destabilizes residential markets. Housing is not only a commodity; it is a necessity. It is time the federal government treated it as such.

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BYRON "BARNEY" RAWSON

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Hamiltonian Byron Rawson was the youngest wing commander in the British Commonwealth during World War II. Barney, as he was known, was an 18-year-old McMaster student when he enlisted in the RCAF. By April 1945, he had piloted bombers in 51 missions and earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses. Until last week, however, his grave was not marked by a military headstone.

Three months after returning home in 1945, at only 23 years old, Barney Rawson took his own life, two days before Christmas. Did he die in the service of his country? According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, he did. As a result of its inquiry, on September 22, with surviving family and RCAF members looking on, a war graves headstone was unveiled in memory of Wing Commander B.F.N. Rawson. Overhead was a flypast of an RCAF Globemaster and Hamilton's restored Lancaster bomber, the favourite aircraft of this great pilot and hero.

May Barney Rawson rest in peace.

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RIDE FOR PITT HOPKINS

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ride For Pitt Hopkins was a great event held in southwestern Ontario on September 9. The event brought awareness to Pitt Hopkins syndrome, a rare children's condition affecting the 18th chromosome. There are 650 cases worldwide, 31 in Canada and 11 in the province of Ontario. It is estimated that there are 30 cases in Ontario right now, but many of those suffering from the disease remain undiagnosed.

That is why the Widows Sons Thames Valley chapter organized this special event. I had the chance to meet Jacob and his mom and dad at this event. His parents shared with me their daily routines, their story and how they work to make Jacob's life better every day. His mother shares his story at "Steps with jacob" on Facebook, sharing the impacts of Pitt Hopkins on Jacob's life, and how he is living with Pitt Hopkins syndrome.

I thank the local Masons, specifically James Rose, for the invite and gear, and for sharing the great work volunteers do in our community.

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THE VIRTUE FOUNDATION

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Casey Wright and Danny Virtue. Casey and Danny are true role models in my riding, and have dedicated their lives to helping others.

Casey has fought cancer since he was a child. He has suffered from many other health complications. Casey remains positive and has led countless fundraising initiatives for hospitals and community organizations.

In addition, in 2002, Danny established a non-profit in my riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. The Virtue Foundation is dedicated to raising awareness for children with physical, mental and financial challenges.

I would like to commend both Casey and Danny for their outstanding community service as they continue to inspire us with their hard work at The Virtue Foundation.

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I had the pleasure of attending an event to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 94, which is located in my riding, Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne.

[*English*]

I was thrilled to join fellow comrades and friends of Greenfield Park Legion Branch 94 in recognizing the vital role it has played in supporting our veterans and the wider community for 75 years and counting.

From a membership of 15 in 1943 to more than 500 today, Branch 94 has grown into a thriving organization that has proven it is here to stay. In fact, last year it was named the best legion in Quebec by provincial command.

[*Translation*]

From its finely tuned poppy drive to the annual picnic for veterans at Ste. Anne's Hospital, the Greenfield Park legion continues to offer hundreds of activities every year.

[*English*]

I ask my fellow MPs to join me in congratulating Greenfield Park Legion Branch 94 on its diamond jubilee.

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SENIORS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, October 1 is National Seniors Day. It is a day to pay tribute to Canadian seniors, who have built our country and continue to make valuable contributions.

I love to meet with seniors and learn from them. One of those incredible seniors is Maria Mellerstig. On October 21, she turns 104 years old. I have visited many seniors at Chartwell Langley Gardens and Chartwell Renaissance, beautiful retirement communities that are still giving through charitable programs.

However, seniors have concerns. They have items they need to buy, and they would like those items to be GST-exempt. They do not like the Prime Minister buying pipelines. They do not like illegal border crossing. They do not like the high price of gas. They wonder why it took the Prime Minister three years to appoint a Minister of Seniors. Seniors deserve our help to age with dignity.

I love seniors and wish them all a happy National Seniors Day.

GINA CODY SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted today to celebrate Don Valley West resident Dr. Gina Parvaneh Cody's lifetime contribution in engineering and her generous $15-million gift to Concordia University in Montreal. Born in Iran, Dr. Cody arrived in Canada in 1979 with $2,000 in her pocket.

In 1989, she became the first woman to earn a Ph.D. in building engineering at Concordia. She went on to become president and principal shareholder of CCI, an internationally known consulting firm. In recognition of Gina's achievements in her field, and of her generosity, the engineering school has been renamed the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science at Concordia University, the first engineering faculty in Canada to be named after a woman.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate Gina Cody and thank her for her generosity.

[*English*]

Her generosity will foster gender equality, diversity and inclusion for the next generation. Our world is changing. It is better through her hard work. I offer my heartfelt thanks to Gina Cody.

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NATIONAL TREE DAY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was National Tree Day. Trees are essential to our lives. They provide us with oxygen, clean our water, purify our air, elevate our mood and so much more. A tree can sequester 10 tonnes of carbon dioxide by the time it is 40 years old, so trees are invaluable to our battle against climate change. Not only must we take care of our forests, but we must also expand the living infrastructure within our cities.

Successive Canadian governments of all stripes have supported healthy forests, and are bringing more trees into cities. That is why Tree Canada, Canada's leading national tree organization, has recognized the people of Canada with its coveted Eterne Award.

In 2011, this House passed a motion by MP Royal Galipeau to proclaim Canada's first National Tree Day. In Royal's honour, a sugar maple tree was planted yesterday with his widow, Ms. Anne Pallascio, and the Clerk of the Privy Council, to mark this special occasion, National Tree Day 2018.

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● (1410)

ORANGE SHIRT DAY

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like many across the country, the first day of school for my family meant new shoes, new clothes and that famous awkward family photo. It also included the children returning excitedly home at the end of the day to share stories about their new teacher and who they got to sit beside. For many residential school survivors, the first day of school was often a day of horror and pain.

Orange Shirt Day was launched in my home province of British Columbia, based on the heartbreaking story of Phyllis Webstad. She was six years old when she began attending St. Joseph's Mission School in Williams Lake. On the first day, a bright, new orange shirt that had been a gift from her grandmother was taken away from her. She wrote, "The colour orange has always reminded me of that day... how my feelings didn't matter, how no one cared and how I felt like I was worth nothing."

This week, children in schools across Canada will wear orange shirts to commemorate the legacy of the residential schools. As each shirt proudly declares, every child matters. Their traditions, families, communities and dreams matter.

* * *

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on World Tourism Day we thank 1.8 million dedicated Canadian tourism workers.

[*Translation*]

Tourism is an economic driver that creates good jobs in all our communities, from coast to coast to coast.

[*English*]

In fact, the tourism sector provides more jobs for Canadians than the oil and gas, mining, agriculture, aerospace and auto manufacturing industries combined.

This fall we will gather to celebrate Canadian tourism and the amazing award finalists from across the country at the 2018 Canadian Tourism Awards. This year's nominees represent amazing companies and experiences from coast to coast to coast, including Acadian Sturgeon and Caviar from my own riding of Fundy Royal.

[*Translation*]

With the Canada-China year of tourism well under way, I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to helping Canada's tourism industry flourish to create good jobs for the middle class.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were elected on a promise to protect the environment and end subsidies to oil and gas companies. What did they do? They used $4.5 billion of taxpayers' money to buy a 65-year-old pipeline, giving an American oil company a 647% profit.

The Liberals were elected on a promise to work towards reconciliation with first nations. What did they do? They bungled the consultation on Trans Mountain and got a slap on the wrist by the Supreme Court. Now the Liberals are saying they are going to redo the consultation, but the project is going ahead regardless. That shows utter contempt for indigenous peoples.

The Conservatives, meanwhile, want to turn back the clock. The energy east pipeline project is supposed to be dead and buried, but apparently they want to bring it back to life, like a zombie. Surprise, surprise—the Liberals are open to it. Welcome to the Liberal-Conservative pipeline coalition. Luckily, the Quebec New Democrats are here to defend the Quebec consensus and protect our environment.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this summer, the failures of the Liberal government grew exponentially. Its high-tax agenda continues to chase away economic growth and opportunity. Trade agreements would help increase our competitiveness, but the Liberals cannot seem to get that job done either. The Liberals refused to prioritize passing the CPTPP and left Canadians on the outside looking in on NAFTA negotiations.

Provincial support for the costly and ineffective federal carbon tax is plummeting and the special deal the Liberals cut with large corporations is an admission of their own failed policy.

A month after the Federal Court's decision against the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline, there is still no plan to get that pipeline built.

Whether it is the economy, trade, taxes, ethics, pipelines or immigration, the failures of the current Liberal government are hurting Canadians. One thing is certain: Canadians deserve better.

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● (1415)

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the end of almost a quarter century of service in Canada's Parliament by the Hon. Art Eggleton, who is celebrating his 75th birthday this Saturday and is retiring as a senator after thirteen and a half years.

Before serving in the Senate, Art was a member of this House for 11 years, elected in the riding of York Centre, which I now have the honour to represent. He served in the cabinet of Prime Minister Chrétien in three portfolios over nine years. Before that, he spent 22 years on Toronto city council, 11 of them as the longest-serving mayor of the City of Toronto. Altogether, he has spent over 45 years in public service.

He has been a friend and a mentor to me and was one of my very first supporters.

On behalf of all members of this House, I want to thank Art for his service to Canada, and send best wishes to him and Camille as they head into this new stage of their lives.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadian jobs rely on NAFTA. A failure would be disastrous for our economy. Canadians are becoming more and more nervous and fear for their jobs. It seems as though the Prime Minister did not ask to meet with the president when they were both in New York earlier this week.

Can the Prime Minister explain why he decided that it was not necessary to meet with the president?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said from the outset, our objective is to update and modernize NAFTA in a way that is good for Canada. We are constructive at the negotiating table. Our negotiators are tough because they are doing their job. It is our responsibility to get a good deal for Canada, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are rightly becoming more and more nervous, especially the millions of Canadians whose jobs depend on NAFTA.

RBC Economics says that 500,000 jobs alone would be vulnerable if NAFTA fails. The Canadian Automobile Dealers Association says an additional 100,000 jobs would be lost in Ontario if auto tariffs are imposed.

Could the Prime Minister inform the House if he has received any assurances that new tariffs on the auto sector will not be applied next week if no deal is reached this week?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said from the outset, our objective in these talks is to update and modernize NAFTA in a way that is good for Canada and for Canadians.

We are constructive at the negotiating table negotiating in an ongoing fashion to make sure that the deal is right for Canada. It is our job to get the right deal for Canada and for Canadians, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

The Conservatives want to sign any old deal quickly at any time. We will not agree to a deal that is not in the best interests of Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister had multiple opportunities to inform Canadians as to whether or not he will reverse the decision by the Correctional Service of Canada and put Tori Stafford's killer back behind bars. I would like to give him another opportunity to do so today. He knows he has the power. Will he use it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, our hearts go out to the family members of Tori Stafford for the lost they endured.

The offender in question was moved from maximum security to medium security in 2014 under the Conservatives. She remains in medium security now.

As the Conservative member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis said in his capacity as public safety minister, "I do not control the security classification of individual prisoners."

However, the minister has asked that the commissioner of Correctional Service of Canada review this decision to ensure that it was taken properly and in accordance with long-standing policy.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows he is playing games with words.

Tori Stafford's killer was behind bars and behind razor wire. Now she is living in a condo. He knows he has the ability to force this decision to be reversed. Section 6 of the act gives him that very power.

I know he would like to talk about every other aspect of this case but it is a very simple question. Will he put Tori Stafford's killer back behind bars?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, to be absolutely clear, the offender in question was moved from maximum security to medium security in 2014 under the Conservatives and she remains in medium security now.

The Conservatives should know that the minister does not control the security classification of individual prisoners because that is exactly what the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis confirmed in the past. The minister has asked the commissioner to review this decision.

As the Conservative member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo once said, "We need to let the many steps of an—"

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows that Tori Stafford's killer was behind razor wire and bars and is now in a condo.

He also knows that he does have the ability. Let me read to him what the act actually says. It says:

> The Governor in Council may appoint a person to be known as the Commissioner of Corrections who, under the direction of the Minister, has the control and management of the Service and all matters connected with the Service.

Will the Prime Minister use the authority he has to put the killer back behind bars?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I will let Canadians determine who is playing word games with talks of condos.

The facts of the matter are clear. In 2014, under those Conservatives, the offender in question was moved from maximum security to medium security, and that individual remains in medium security to this very day.

[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my constituents, including those in Saint-Elzéar-de-Témiscouata, Saint-Honoré-de-Témiscouata and Dégelis are steadfastly opposed to a pipeline in Témiscouata. A number of associations, including the Union des municipalités du Québec, have backed this position. There is much talk about energy east, and the Conservatives want this project back on the table.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that he has no intention of revisiting energy east?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the energy east pipeline project was cancelled by the company that wanted to carry it out because of changes in market conditions and their business plan.

If people want to propose projects, we will always review them. However, we will make sure that all projects respect indigenous communities, the communities affected, science, and environmental protection. This is what Canadians across the country expect.

[*English*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, media reports suggest that the government's lawyers are trying to keep findings of allegations of CSIS spying on anti-pipeline activists private. This is deeply concerning. It is alleged that CSIS considered opposition to the petroleum industry a threat to national security and shared information with the National Energy Board about so-called radicalized environmentalists and passed this information to oil companies. If any of this is true, it is highly concerning.

When will the government stop using the Harper approach and respect environmental activists' rights?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly reconfirm that this government believes in the rights of all Canadians to protest and communicate their positions in a peaceful manner.

In 2017, the Security Intelligence Review Committee investigated and dismissed the complaint. SIRC's decision to maintain the confidentiality of its report and related documents will be reviewed and addressed by the Federal Court. Of course, as this case is currently before the courts, we cannot comment further at this time.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister committed to free, prior and informed consent on projects affecting indigenous peoples' rights, but he is determined to push ahead with the pipeline opposed by first nations.

Reconciliation is not a talking point. It requires true understanding. Will the Prime Minister commit today to have his full cabinet sit with indigenous knowledge keepers to learn what free, prior and informed consent really means?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his deep passion for this file, one that we all care deeply about as Canadians, and that we need to continue to work on. We recognize that there is much to do in terms of reconciliation. That is why we are moving forward in consultation in supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We will continue to listen to all voices, those in favour of projects and those opposed to projects, to make sure that we work together to get the right path for Canada.

● (1425)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Wow, Mr. Speaker, it is becoming a file-to-file relationship.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister committed to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of first nations. However, he is determined to move forward with this pipeline that the first nations reject. Reconciliation is not just an empty word. It requires true understanding.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to have his full cabinet sit with indigenous knowledge keepers to learn what free and informed consent really means?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the member opposite. However, he should be careful when he says that all indigenous peoples reject the pipeline. Several indigenous communities have signed agreements concerning this pipeline and support it.

The member cannot listen only to those he agrees with. We must consult and listen to all organizations and all indigenous peoples, not only those aligned with his views.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister was asked more than a dozen times if he would reverse the decision and put Tori Stafford's killer back behind bars. Today, he was again given the opportunity. Instead, he chose to play word games around the Correctional Service of Canada's security levels in prisons. The fact is that this killer is in a healing lodge, which is not where child killers should be. Tori's family is outraged. Does the Prime Minister not understand what they are going through? Will he stand up and simply commit to do what he has the power to do and reverse this decision?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, Tori Stafford's brutal death in 2009 was a horrible gut-wrenching crime for the whole country. The killer, McClintic, was reclassified as medium security in 2014. The government of that day did not challenge that decision. In fact, McClintic remains in a medium security correctional facility today. I have asked the commissioner of the Correctional Service to review every dimension of this case to ensure that all policies have been properly followed and that all those policies are in fact the right ones to—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister could immediately ask the commissioner to reverse that policy and make the necessary changes immediately so that Tori's killer is behind bars.

Canadians are outraged by this. Tori's family is outraged and sickened by what is going on. We are outraged. The question is why is the Prime Minister not outraged? Why are the Liberals not outraged by this? Why will they not stop making excuses, do the right thing and act on the authority they clearly have?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying in response to the previous question, not only is the commissioner of the Correctional Service examining every dimension of this case to ensure that all laws and all policies, as they existed at that time, were properly followed, she is also examining the question of whether those policies are in fact the right ones for the proper handling of inmates and for keeping Canadians safe. I will be very anxious to have her conclusions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals made the serious decision to transfer this child murderer from a prison to a healing lodge, where life is much easier than in prison. The Prime Minister has the power and the responsibility to reverse this decision.

When will the Prime Minister rectify this situation and put Ms. McClintic back behind bars?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation does not give the minister or the government the authority to intervene in the day-to-day operations of the Correctional Service. That power, under the law, is vested in the hands of the commissioner of the Correctional Service. I have asked her to review all of those policies to determine whether or not they are in fact the right policies to keep Canadians safe in this case and every other case.

● (1430)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, McClintic admitted and was convicted of committing these heinous crimes. The Liberals are now defending her transfer from a prison in Ontario straight to a healing lodge. The lodge is a place for people transitioning back into society. However, McClintic is not even eligible for parole until 2031. She is not transitioning. The Prime Minister has the authority and the responsibility to reverse this decision. Will he do the right thing?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the very issues that have been referred to by this hon. member in her question are issues that will be very carefully examined by the commissioner of the Correctional Service, who has the legal authority and is responding to the request I made to her to make sure that all policies were properly followed and that those policies are in fact the best ones to keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety, in a CTV News program, called Terri-Lynne McClintic's role in the abduction, sexual assault and murder of an eight-year-old girl "bad practices". Yesterday, the Prime Minister refused to commit to Canadians that he would use every tool at his disposal to reverse the decision to transfer this woman from behind bars to a lodge.

Will the minister apologize for trivializing McClintic's crime and revoke this transfer?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no member of the House has ever trivialized the circumstances that we are dealing with. In fact, it was a horrible crime, a horrible crime that all Canadians were repulsed by.

In light of that, I have made the request to the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada to investigate the circumstances of this case to make sure that all policies were followed, and also to make sure that the policies are in fact right in this case and all cases to keep Canadians safe and to manage and handle inmates in the proper way.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Terri-Lynne McClintic went from behind bars to a lodge where single and family residential units with bathrooms, a bedroom, a kitchenette with an eating area and a living room exist. That is where she is at right now, not behind bars. That might be where someone with bad practices might go, but not someone who is an atrocious, evil child killer.

The minister has the power to revoke this transfer. He needs to apologize for calling it bad practices, and he needs to revoke the transfer today.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has referred to an atrocious, evil child killer. In fact, that description applied in 2014 when the decision was taken by the previous government to change her classification from maximum to medium. That is what happened in 2014.

Mr. John Brassard: She should be behind razor wires, not surrounded by trees.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil will come to order.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of crime, I was just in Grassy Narrows with Jagmeet Singh where people live on the most beautiful lake and cannot drink their own water.

The poisoning of the people of Wabigoon-English River system was not an accident. It was a corporate crime of massive proportions, and the federal agencies have covered up the ongoing contamination to this day.

The Prime Minister promised to clean the river once and for all. He has put no money into it. He has refused to meet the community. What is it going to take for the Prime Minister to stand up and end the ongoing poisoning of the people of the Wabigoon River once and for all?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the member opposite had the opportunity to visit this important community. I had the opportunity to meet with their past chief just a number of months ago, and I look forward to having the opportunity to meet the new chief very soon.

The issues this community has had to deal with are issues that no community should have to deal with. We have been firm in our commitment to support them. I have promised to support them in the development of a treatment centre for the people who have suffered from contamination of their water sources in the community, and we will continue to work with them to address all of their needs.

● (1435)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was pretty shaken up to see the visible impact of Minamata disease on the children, who do not just carry it in their bodies, as 80% of these children are suffering permanent cognitive damage. Yet the government has cut all of the special education funding for the school. There is not a school board in this country that would deny special ed funding to children with such needs.

Will the Prime Minister explain to the people of Grassy Narrows why he refuses to spend a dime helping the children who will carry the impacts of this disease their whole lives?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always important that we raise the issues of Grassy Narrows and that we all stand behind supporting this community. As I said already, we have supported them in working toward building a new treatment centre.

I am surprised to hear what the member is saying about special education and I will look into that immediately. We have made it very clear that we will support the needs of children through Jordan's principle and other mechanisms, and I will absolutely ensure that it happens.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Sean Bruyea is a veteran and one of the leading advocates for veterans. I did not always agree with Sean when I was minister, but I always showed him respect, unlike the situation now, and I always knew that he knew his stuff. The current minister chose instead to disrespect Sean and to attack him publicly.

Will the minister rise in the House today, show respect and stand by that veteran and apologize for publicly attacking Sean Bruyea?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that veterans and their families know about the benefits and programs available to them is essential to my job as Minister of Veterans Affairs. That is why it is so important to explain what is involved. That is why I have hosted over 40 veteran town halls across the country. It is why we are working so hard to explain the pension for life as clearly as we can. These new benefits are not simple because the problems we are trying to solve are not simple. Our programs are about dealing with the problems that some veterans face, and about facing them in a very effective way.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): What is tragic, Mr. Speaker, and why Mr. Bruyea brought his small claims case is that the Department of Veterans Affairs told the minister that Mr. Bruyea's complaints about broken Liberal promises on pensions and other things were in fact correct. The minister ignored his own department and sent three government lawyers to crush Mr. Bruyea's lawsuit.

I will ask again. The minister, all week, has said he stands by veterans. Will he show respect for Mr. Bruyea, stand today and apologize?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to supporting Canada's veterans and their families and ensuring that they are aware of all the benefits they are entitled to. I engage regularly with veterans from coast to coast to coast, I hosted over 40 veteran town halls, and I am always open to different viewpoints.

It is important to note that we do not take veterans to court. However, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this specific case because it is currently being appealed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when veteran Sean Bruyea criticized the new pension for life program promised to our valiant veterans, the Minister of Veterans Affairs chose to attack Mr. Bruyea's credibility instead of listening to him. Why? Because the minister knew he was wrong.

Mr. Bruyea is a well-respected veteran and department officials said they agreed with a number of things he said.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs listen to his departmental officials from time to time and apologize to Mr. Bruyea?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that veterans and their families are aware of the benefits and programs available to them is an important part of my work as Minister of Veterans Affairs. That is why it is so important to explain what that entails. That is why I hosted more than 40 town halls with veterans and why we are working so hard to explain the pension for life as clearly as possible.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Veterans Affairs attacked and humiliated veteran Sean Bruyea. He attacked him despite his own officials confirming that Captain Bruyea's assessment of the pension for life program was largely correct. When Captain Bruyea dared to stand up for himself, the minister slapped him down in court, sending high-priced lawyers after him.

Why is the minister continuing his shameless attack on this veteran?

● (1440)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that veterans and their families know about the benefits and programs they are entitled to is essential to my job as Minister of Veterans Affairs. That is why it is so important to explain what is involved. It is why I have hosted over 40 town halls across the country. It is why I am working so hard to explain the pension for life as clearly as I can.

When I see an article that has misleading rhetoric, saying that we are trying to make people swallow our programs or that the $10 billion we are investing is flim-flam, it is my responsibility to say no, it is not.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want everyone here to understand that I do not appreciate having my rights explained to me in this place by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and the government have made it every clear to me that they do not understand our rights.

Let me ask again. Will the Prime Minister commit today to having his full cabinet sit with indigenous knowledge keepers and learn what free, prior and informed consent really means?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that indigenous peoples have inherent and treaty rights, and we are committed to removing colonial barriers that impede the exercise of those rights. That is why we work so hard in partnership with first nations, Inuit and Métis people to create a new recognition and implementation of indigenous rights framework. The framework will ensure that Canada moves from a denial of rights approach to one that recognizes and affirms those rights, and we will be glad to work further with the member opposite in perfecting those rights.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all have a lot to learn.

People in coastal communities tell me that they are appalled that the Prime Minister is still recklessly pushing the expansion of Trans Mountain. The court ruled that the assessment process was deeply flawed. It did not even consider the sevenfold oil tanker traffic increase and the risk it put on orca whales and our coast, yet Liberals still have taxpayers on the hook for billions, buying TMX instead of investing now in the housing people desperately need.

What will the Prime Minister do? Will he finally listen to coastal communities and cancel this pipeline expansion before—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the context of this project, the government took the position that environmental sustainability and economic progress needed to go hand in hand. We followed with that mantra all the way through. Even though the scoping of marine shipping was scoped out by the previous government, we focused very much on marine shipping. We focused on the plight of the killer whales. We have worked very hard on those issues, and we will be taking some of that information and providing it to the National Energy Board as it moves through the process that has now been established.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's forests are important in a number of ways. They help mitigate the impacts of climate change and support innovation, economic growth and biodiversity, all the while creating good middle-class jobs.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources update this House on what the government has been doing to promote Canada's forest industry and to protect the health of our forests for future generations of Canadians?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Centre for his question. I look forward to working with him in his new role on the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of tabling the 20th edition of the The State of Canada's Forests report. The report reinforces our commitment to grow the economy, create jobs and protect the environment as we highlight the innovative ways people work and study in our forests. I encourage all members of this House to review the report.

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[*Translation*]

VETERANS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, in response to pressure by the opposition, the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced that a civilian could no longer receive benefits from the program for veterans and their families if that civilian is in prison. However, the government refused to say whether Christopher Garnier, the cop killer, is still receiving benefits under that program.

Can the Prime Minister tell us definitively whether the government has stopped paying for this criminal?

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the family of Constable Campbell.

As I said, I asked the department to review the decision and the findings. I directed them to, first of all, ensure that the services received by a family member of a veteran are related to the veteran's service, and where they are not, that the case be reviewed by a senior official, and as well, to address its policy in relation to providing treatment to family members under extenuating circumstances, such as conviction for a serious crime.

● (1445)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, we moved a motion calling on the government to immediately stop paying for treatments provided to criminal Christopher Garnier, who savagely murdered a police officer, under a program for veterans and their families.

Everyone—the Conservatives, the NDP, the Green Party and the Bloc—voted in favour of the motion except for, yes, the Liberals. That is unacceptable.

The Prime Minister has the power to reverse this decision. What is he waiting for to immediately stop these payments for this criminal?

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the family of Constable Campbell, as I said. For privacy reasons, we cannot comment on the specifics of this case.

Let me say this. Unlike the Harper Conservatives, we understand that when a veteran serves, the family serves with him. We take mental health seriously. That is why we opened a new centre of excellence on PTSD and mental illness. We launched a joint suicide prevention strategy.

I will say once again that if veterans are in need of mental health supports, we will give them the resources they need when they need them.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while our veterans have faced the most unimaginable of horrors, our Prime Minister cannot stomach the truth of those horrors. For veterans, PTSD is a burden they carry from serving a grateful nation.

Chris Garnier developed PTSD strangling officer Catherine Campbell, putting her body in a compost bin and dumping her under a bridge. Chris Garnier is not a veteran, so why is he getting veterans benefits?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts do indeed go out to the family of Constable Campbell. For privacy reasons, we cannot comment on the specifics of this case, but I will say that unlike the Harper Conservatives, we understand that when a veteran serves, his family serves with him. We take mental health seriously. That is why we reopened nine offices across the country, which had been shuttered, closed, by the previous government.

Once again, if veterans are in need of mental health supports, we will give them the resources they need when they need them.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when veteran Sean Bruyea questioned the rhetoric of this government, the first thing the Minister of Veterans Affairs did was have his staff fact-check his claims, but when they confirmed the numbers, the minister sent in high-priced lawyers to shut Mr. Bruyea up.

Why does the minister protect the rights of convicted murderer Chris Garnier and attack the rights of veterans like Sean Bruyea?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that veterans and their families know about the benefits and programs they deserve and are entitled to is essential to my job as Minister of Veterans Affairs. That is why it is so important to explain what is involved. That is why I have hosted over 40 veterans town halls across the country. It is why we are working so hard to explain the pension for life as clearly as we can.

More effective programming will help veterans transition to civilian life with dignity. More effective benefits will help in supporting families, and more effective supports will help get ill and injured veterans well again.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the shop floors of Rio Tinto, Résolu and SMEs in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, there are hundreds of men and women wondering what will happen to their jobs. For them, the NAFTA negotiations are not about numbers, a war of egos or the U.S. President's comments; it is their future that is on the line.

If NAFTA is terminated, can the Prime Minister tell us what he will do to help workers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and across the country?

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that the U.S. 232 measures have created real challenges for Canadian workers and their businesses. That is why we have made up to $2 billion available to defend and protect their interests. These measures include extending work sharing agreements, increased funding for skills training, funding to bolster the competitiveness of Canadian manufacturers and support for companies that diversify their exports. Other measures since July 2018 include 130 loans, already authorized by BDC, for a total of $100 million.

• (1450)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Yesterday, U.S. president Donald Trump signalled that the NAFTA renegotiations are not going well, and he threatened once again to tax Canadian cars. Ericka and Jason are auto workers who live in Belle River, in my riding. Like tens of thousands of other auto workers, they are very concerned about these repeated attacks. They are worried that their jobs will be lost if Canada fails to secure a better NAFTA.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Is NAFTA dead in the water, and what is his plan to defend Canadian jobs if the U.S. moves ahead with auto tariffs?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an important truism of trade negotiations is that nothing is done until it is actually done. We continue to work in a constructive atmosphere with good faith on all sides. However, we have always been clear that no deal is better than a bad deal. We are going to remain firm on that principle, because Canadians expect us to stand up for them. That is exactly what this government is going to do, especially for the auto industry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear: for three years, the Liberals have constantly attacked our small businesses, job creators and wealth creators. What will they attack us with next? The Liberal carbon tax. That is unacceptable.

These three years of Liberal inaction have resulted in a 5% reduction in domestic investment, a 35% reduction in foreign investment in Canada and, good for them, a 66% increase in Canadian investment in the U.S.

Why is the Prime Minister giving Donald Trump so much help?

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with a plan that is going to grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time. In particular, I note the support we are giving to small businesses by lowering the small-business tax to 9%, the lowest in the G7. We are investing in the clean economy that is adding jobs in communities in every province in Canada and in the territories as well.

If we are moving forward with a plan, I expect all parties to get on board. We are going to protect the environment and grow the economy, as we have been for the past three years, with half a million jobs added to the Canadian economy.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Those are fantastic lyrics, Mr. Speaker, but let us look at the result, the real facts. Since the government has been in power, what we have seen is 5% less investment in Canada and 35% less foreign investment in Canada, but growing investment of 66% by Canadians in the U.S.A. Why are the Liberals helping so much the President of the United States, Donald Trump?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps we should remember that when we came into office, we were in a technical recession. What has happened since then? We have made investments in Canadians. We found ourselves with the fastest growth among G7 countries in 2017. Where are we today? More Canadians are working than ever before, and we are in a situation where, to inform this House, business investment has been going up for the last six consecutive quarters. It is 8% up.

Those are the real facts. We are going to continue to invest on behalf of Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after his summer of failures, the Prime Minister went back on his word. In January he promised hundreds of jobs, but he is handing out crumbs, which is resulting in layoffs this fall at Davie shipyard. The problem remains. The Royal Canadian Navy desperately needs a second supply ship.

After the unprecedented success of the *Asterix* and the growing delays in the naval strategy, what is stopping the Liberals from awarding the second ship, the *Obelix*, to Davie shipyard right now?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our partnership with Davie shipyard.

After 10 long years, we have an interim supply ship sailing the Pacific ocean thanks to the men and women at Davie shipyard.

This summer, I had the pleasure of visiting Davie shipyard and announcing a $610-million contract for the acquisition of three interim icebreakers for our Coast Guard.

Our partnership with Davie shipyard is intact and we are proud of that.

● (1455)

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has partnered with the Métis through the Canada-Métis Nation Accord. Through this accord, the Métis nation has identified improved access to the delivery and control of affordable and social housing as a key priority. Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations update this House as to progress on this shared priority?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations had the pleasure of signing the co-developed Métis nation housing agreement with governing members of the Métis National Council. The design, delivery and administration of housing services for citizens of the Métis nation will now be undertaken by its governing members and supported by a $500-million investment over 10 years, as set forth in budget 2018. This will improve socio-economic conditions for members of the Métis nation and drive progress toward their vision of self-determination.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the development needs across the world are enormous. Despite the Liberals' refusal to meet our previous Conservative government's level of development funding, the Prime Minister claims to have a plan. He has announced that he is going to set up yet another bureaucracy to try to convince managers of Canadian pension plans to invest in other countries. Why should Canadians trust the Liberals to invest their pension funds abroad, where they have failed so miserably to attract investment into this country?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is determined to support sustainable development goals and address climate objectives. Meeting 2030 targets will require more resources than just what governments can provide. That is why we will contribute $20 million to the global infrastructure hub that will bring together public and private investors to develop critical infrastructure projects that will benefit everyone, including women and girls, strengthen their communities and connect global markets.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister answered my question with some old material about his commitment to our cultural industries.

It has been a year since the Netflix agreement was announced, and key players in our cultural industry have already confirmed to CBC/Radio-Canada what we knew from the start. This was a stunt that benefits web giants instead of forcing them to broadcast and fund our original cultural productions.

Our creators are tired of waiting, but the minister said that we have to wait for the panel to submit its report in 2020. That is five years too late.

Does the minister understand how urgent this situation is or is he going to regurgitate the same talking points as his predecessor? We are going to disappear.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows that our government is there for our artists, creators and artisans.

We have invested $3.2 billion in culture, more specifically in CBC/Radio-Canada, the National Film Board and the Canada Council for the Arts, as well as in cultural export. My colleague knows all that.

He also knows that we asked a panel of experts to consider this issue. We are going to receive their recommendations and pass legislation with a very clear provision: Everyone who participates in the system has to contribute to it, and there will be no free passes. My colleague must understand that at least.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2018, our government announced a major step forward in terms of equality. In June 2019, we will introduce a new EI parental sharing benefit to help parents share the work of raising their children more equally.

Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development confirm to the House that the government is still on track to deliver on that promise?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank and congratulate the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell on all his hard work on behalf of families.

We know that improving gender equality means more prosperity for everyone. That is why we were so proud to introduce this new five-week parental sharing benefit in budget 2018. We were also very proud to announce yesterday that we will be introducing it three months earlier than originally planned, specifically in March 2019, which will allow 24,000 more parents to receive it.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice shamefully scolded 9/11 widow Maureen Basnicki for understandably criticizing the current government's $10.5-million payout to al Qaeda terrorist Omar Khadr. He even went so far as to compare Maureen's husband, a victim of terrorism, with the convicted terrorist Khadr.

Will the parliamentary secretary stand in his place and apologize to Maureen Basnicki?

● (1500)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the deaths that occurred on 9/11 as a result of an unspeakable act of terror at the hands of al Qaeda were a tragedy. I apologize for not being more sensitive at the standing committee to Mrs. Basnicki, a 9/11 widow, about her loss.

Nevertheless, I remain firm in my conviction that all Canadians should also be outraged whenever a government is complicit in the torture of a Canadian citizen, in direct violation of the Charter of Rights, no matter how heinous that citizen's crimes. When that complicity in torture occurs, a government should acknowledge it and take responsibility for it, as we have done.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is no shortage of commissions of inquiry at the federal level. There have been some on light topics, such as the saltfish trade and horse racing. There have been some on tragedies like the Air India terrorist attack. However, the government refuses to launch one on the worst rail disaster in Canadian history, which killed 47 people in Lac-Mégantic.

I will ask again. Will the Prime Minister order a commission of inquiry into the Lac-Mégantic tragedy and the lax rail transportation regulations?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Transportation Safety Board has carefully examined the tragedy that took place in Lac-Mégantic and made many recommendations, which we are currently implementing. A number of them were implemented by the previous government, and we continue to further improve safety in order to protect Canadians who live near rail lines and those who take the train.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, the House endorsed the findings of the UN mission that military authorities in Myanmar committed a genocide against the Rohingya, a crime that falls under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

This all unfolded under the watchful eye of the de facto head of government, Aung San Suu Kyi. One week later, and nothing has been done to revoke her honorary citizenship.

When will the Prime Minister put the question to the House, as he implied he would do?

Does he realize that, in doing nothing, we continue to honour someone who was complicit in genocide?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Aung San Suu Kyi's honorary citizenship is something that Parliament could reflect on.

Our government is focused on measures that will make a real difference for Rohingya refugees. We are providing food aid to more than one million refugees, and we are committed to providing $300 million in humanitarian assistance.

We will continue to take concrete action to save lives and protect the Rohingya.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, PPC): Mr. Speaker, our American partners have repeatedly said that there will be no deal on NAFTA until we get rid of our 300% tariff on dairy products. Time is running out.

Is the government willing to sacrifice our auto industry and also put at risk 20% of our economy simply to protect the cartel of supply management at the expense of 35 million Canadians? Is no deal better than a good deal?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say I appreciate my hon. colleague's question, but I do not. The fact of the matter is that we are the party that implemented supply management and we are the government that will support supply management.

My hon. colleague is fully aware that supply management farmers supply top quality safe food for Canadians and receive appropriate return. We will continue to support supply management in our country.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Joliette on a point of order.

* * *

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

> That the House
>
> (a) reiterate the motion passed unanimously in this House on September 20 recognizing that the crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingyas constitute a genocide
>
> (b) and, consequently, revoke the honorary Canadian citizenship bestowed on Aung San Suu Kyi in 2007.

● (1505)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It relates to a convention of the House, and I will cite Beauchesne's sixth edition, page 151, with respect to "Documents Cited". It is a convention of the House that when a member of the government, a minister or parliamentary secretary, reads a document into the record of the House, that document will then be tabled.

Today, the parliamentary secretary to the minister responsible for Canada-U.S. relations, the member for Orléans, appeared to read into the record the Liberal NAFTA plan, when he said "no deal is better than a bad deal". We would like him to table the official Liberal NAFTA plan today.

The Speaker: It sounds like that might be debate rather than a point of order and I do not see anyone rising to respond.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the government House leader if she could let us know what the business of the House is for the rest of this week and next week.

The Speaker: I want to remind members, including my hon. friend from Cape Breton—Canso, that under the Standing Orders, members are not permitted to walk between the person speaking and the Chair. This is to be avoided in the future. I know he wishes he could go back in time to correct that.

The hon. government House leader.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue debate on the NDP opposition motion.

Tomorrow, we will start the second reading debate on Bill C-82, the multilateral instrument in respect of tax conventions act.

Monday, we will resume second reading debate of Bill C-77 on the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and of Bill C-78, the family law act.

[*English*]

Next Tuesday, October 2, shall be an allotted day.

Finally, for the rest of the week, priority shall be given to report stage and third reading of Bill C-79, the CPTPP implementation act; and the Senate amendments on Bill C-65, the framework for the prevention of harassment.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: There are three minutes remaining in questions and comments following the speech of the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*English*]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I need not remind this place that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on housing, Leilani Farha, called upon the government to finally act on its commitments to provide the right to housing. Nowhere is that more critical than our indigenous communities in the far north for the Inuit, first nations and Métis.

I wonder if the member could speak not only to those concerns, but the concerns about the need for rural housing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, rural communities are in desperate need. In many cases, there has been zero investment in social housing. Many indigenous individuals live off reserve. Housing can be hard to find for anyone, but on reserve, the situation is appalling. No new houses have been built. One can tell just by looking at the buildings. Absolutely nothing is happening.

Sometimes, several families crowd into a single dwelling together. Some people feel they cannot escape domestic violence because they are reluctant to kick their partner or ex-partner out for good. This is extremely important, and the time to take action is now. We cannot wait for the government to get another term in office. We need to invest in social housing now to help our rural communities and the indigenous communities in my riding and all over rural Canada.

● (1510)

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member opposite say that there are no federal investments in housing for her riding and I beg to differ. In fact, taking a look at the investment in affordable housing, which is a cost-share program with the provinces that is 50% federally funded, there are programs under way in her riding at 541 Chénier in Rouyn-Noranda.

There are programs at Témiscamingue with Eagle Village First Nation. There are additional programs at the Council of the First Nation of Abitibiwinni. There are additional programs right across her riding. In fact, there is a grand total of almost $7 million that has been invested since we took office

The real question for the member opposite is this. She has made a very strong case for investments in rural housing and we absolutely agree with that. However, if you read the motion from the NDP, they do not mention one single time the word "rural". They do not prioritize rural investments. They do not mention a target for rural investments. They do not qualify or talk about a program for—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue has time for a brief answer.

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, if we had tried to address every single housing-related problem in our motion, it would have been 686 pages long. Obviously, we had to simplify so everyone can grasp it. I talked about investing in rural communities. I know my colleague has probably never been to my riding, but Rouyn-Noranda is a town of about 35,000. I mentioned communities with about 300 residents. For anyone who is not aware that Abitibi—Témiscamingue has about 100 cities, towns, communities and parts of towns that have been amalgamated but are still far apart, it can be extremely confusing. I do not expect my colleague to know much about my riding, but everyone should know the difference between a city and a small town that is struggling to deliver services.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Spadina—Fort York.

I am going to use my time today to talk about "reaching home", our government's new initiative that will give communities the tools and funding to work toward a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness over the next 10 years.

Reaching home will officially launch on April 1, 2019 as part of Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, our government's 10-year, $40 billion-plus plan to lift thousands of Canadians off the streets and get families out of inadequate and temporary housing. These are bold changes.

Under the national housing strategy, our aim is to see the building of 100,000 new housing units and 300,000 repaired or renewed housing units. This will create a new generation of housing in Canada. Our plan will promote diverse communities. It will provide housing that is sustainable, accessible, mixed-income and mixed-use. We will build housing that is fully integrated into the community, close to transit, close to work and close to public services. I want to emphasize that these goals and these numbers did not come out of nowhere, they came after more than a year of consultation from coast to coast to coast, a year in which we met with people with lived experience of poverty and homelessness and allowed them to guide the process.

I mention this because not only does it highlight our commitment to developing effective solutions, but it also stands in stark contrast to what the NDP has done and said on this issue. The New Democrats first promised only $50 million per year for the fight against homelessness in their 2015 platform. Our government recognizes the need for substantial investments to be made in housing and is taking action. Our goal is for a more equal Canada for all, including the most vulnerable, one where women and men are empowered to make positive changes that benefit their own lives and our economy as a whole.

As all hon. members appreciate, a stable and permanent home is a launchpad for alleviating poverty and improving the health and well-being of those Canadians who find themselves marginalized. Without a permanent, stable home all else can seem unattainable, and hopelessness gradually pervades until no room remains for even the most modest of personal ambition. As we know, homelessness has a negative economic and social impact on every community in Canada. Therefore, the aim of our government's homelessness strategy is to provide new and expanded supports because we believe that one homeless Canadian is one too many.

As I said, communities participating in reaching home will work toward a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness over the next 10 years. We are investing $2.2 billion over that period to achieve our goal. By 2021-22 we will have doubled annual investments compared to when we took office. We will build on the successful adoption of housing first as a best practice, and work with communities to develop and deliver data-driven system plans with clear outcomes. This new outcomes-based approach will give communities greater flexibility to identify, test and apply innovative solutions and evidence-based practices that achieve results for vulnerable Canadians.

Reaching home funding will also provide communities with the tools they need to deliver systems plans, coordinated access to services and better local data. While providing a strong framework within which the communities can work, the government recognizes that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution. Through reaching home, we will be reinforcing the community-based approach, delivering funding directly to municipalities and local service providers.

Throughout our engagement process, the government heard that the greatest asset of the current homelessness partnering strategy is that it is a community-based program. Through reaching home, the government will reinforce this approach and expand the program's reach to new designated communities. New communities will be added through an open and transparent application process to be launched later in 2018. This expansion will not affect the funding received by the existing 61 designated communities.

● (1515)

In Quebec, the homelessness partnering strategy is delivered through a formal Canada-Quebec agreement that respects the jurisdiction and priorities of both governments in addressing homelessness. Since 2001, five agreements for joint implementation of federal homelessness programming have been concluded, including the current agreement for 2014-2019. In order to implement reaching home and allocate funds in Quebec beyond April 1, 2019, negotiations will be undertaken with the Government of Quebec with the objective of concluding a sixth Canada-Quebec agreement.

We also need to better understand and address the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in Canada's homeless population, and to help achieve, this our government will increase dedicated funding for indigenous-led homelessness initiatives. This funding will support the availability of culturally appropriate services for indigenous peoples living in vulnerable conditions, including indigenous women, youth and mothers with children.

Reaching home will also create a new territorial homelessness funding stream that will collapse existing regional funding streams into a single envelope and offer more flexibility in how funding can be used to address the unique homelessness challenges in the territories.

Over the last year, we worked in consultation with stakeholders, provinces, territories and indigenous partners to understand how Canada's federal homelessness program could be redesigned to better reduce and prevent homelessness across Canada.

Before that consultation, the committee that I chair, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of People with Disabilities, conducted a poverty study. Many members who have read that study know that a huge pillar of that study was affordable housing. In my riding, we helped frame the national housing strategy with some foundational work that we did on that study.

Our reaching home initiative is possible thanks to the points of view and encouragement we gathered from Canadians throughout those numerous consultations.

So to reiterate, as a starting point, we will continue to deliver funding directly to municipalities and local service providers to support the most vulnerable Canadians in accessing and maintaining a safe, stable and affordable home.

We will also give communities more choice. Of course, the housing first model has proven to be very useful for reducing homelessness in Canada and it will continue to be a priority for reaching home. However, we will remain open to innovation in service delivery, to better support any vulnerable population that is at risk of ending up on the street, such as youth, women fleeing domestic violence or people suffering from addiction or mental health problems.

We will work with communities to help them target and reach specific results together. Our national housing strategy supports community engagement to meet local needs and this is why reaching home supports a collaborative, community-based approach.

Simply put, reaching home will adapt to people instead of making people adapt to the program.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague referred to the Canada-Quebec agreements. I had the chance—anyone could have joined in—to walk with the people from FRAPRU, the Quebec social housing coalition, who left Ottawa roughly a month ago to travel to Quebec City. They will arrive in Quebec City tomorrow. They walked 550 kilometers and stopped in all sorts of towns and villages along the way to talk about social housing.

I had the opportunity to welcome them back home in Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, where we walked 1% of the journey together. These people have deep convictions and they are walking on behalf of an entire community of people who need social housing.

In Longueuil—it is not for nothing that they stopped by—there are major housing challenges. The waiting lists are appalling. My team was on the phone with a friend in my riding who is a young professional, a single parent with two children. She came to see my team because she could no longer make ends meet. She pays $1,000 a month in rent.

These situations are commonplace in Longueuil. Fortunately, there are fantastic solutions. People have stepped up. The people on this walk were invited, for example, to have breakfast at Habitations Paul-Pratt, Manoir-Trinité, where seniors have been able to find great social housing and a wonderful quality of life. That is important. These are urgent needs.

I am wondering why we are talking about this today when the government made some lofty promises about great funding, which we were very pleased with. However, 90% of this money will only be disbursed after the government is re-elected. I believe it is horribly Machiavellian to deal with these issues in this way. I can say the same thing about cultural issues. I just blasted the Minister of Canadian Heritage because his committee will release a report in 2020, after the election. That is just appalling. The needs exist right now.

Why does the government not see what people across Canada and especially in Longueuil are dealing with?

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, I too have met with homelessness activists in my riding a number of times. People are very passionate about this issue, and it is an issue that we should be passionate about.

In my riding specifically, there is a gentleman by the name of Paul Tavares. I have spoken about him in the House before. He did a 90-day out-in-the-cold program. He literally spent 90 days outside in the middle of winter in downtown Cambridge to bring awareness to the homelessness issue in Cambridge.

We have the same issue. We have a waiting list with the names of over 3,500 people on it. We know this is a big problem. It is why this government has made it such a priority. It is why not $50 million but $2.2 billion has been put toward this.

I understand the passion of the member opposite. I understand the desire to snap our fingers and have this all done immediately. This is a 10-year plan and we are moving forward with it. In fact, we have already seen programs in my riding. We have a brand new $4.2-million facility in my riding to help with our issue. However, the problem is not gone and we will be working toward fixing it.

● (1525)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the 2015 mandate letter given to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development talked about the federal land surplus. The prior Conservative government had worked on a surplus list. Part of this whole development could be about what could be done to help when it comes to affordable social housing.

If we are looking at the surplus list, how is that going to help with the strategy? I still have not seen how those inner workings are going to be there and what the government is going to do when it gives up these surplus lands.

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, the member and I travelled with the committee when we did the poverty study. We miss her on our committee and we would welcome her back any time.

She knows perfectly well this is something we are looking at and have given incredible attention to. I am reminded of the situation we had in Medicine Hat, Alberta, which took a very innovative approach to homelessness. The city partnered with the province to build. It brought surplus land it had to the table. It was able to show that it could leverage the assets that particular community had to build homes for those who were truly in need.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remarked earlier today about it never being a bad day when the Parliament of Canada is focused on providing housing for Canadians in need and today has been a very good day for that indeed.

I want to quickly push away some of the mythology which has been presented to us by the opposite side that there is no new money in the housing system right now. Let me assure Canadians and Parliament that in our very first budget, not waiting for the $40-billion national housing strategy but in the first budget, we tripled the dollars being partnered with the provinces. The tripling of those dollars has had a huge impact. We also immediately doubled for the first time in the program's history the dollars going to the homeless partnership strategy. It went from $100 million to $200 million, which is a lot more than the $10 million the NDP promised to increase the fund by. It was a substantial increase. Those dollars are being spent year by year and day by day in communities right across this country.

The previous government was only spending $2.36 billion on housing, so when we inherited government, we immediately, with those commitments in the first budget, boosted spending to $5.8 billion. In the next year, last year, we spent $6.8 billion. Those are new dollars building real housing for real people and we are proud of that. That was referred to at the time as the down payment to get us to the national housing strategy.

This myth that the money comes after the next election is just wrong. We started spending the day we took office. We have invested in strong housing programs from coast to coast to coast. We have also renewed the social housing operating agreements, in particular, the federal co-ops. Those dollars are real. They are in real people's lives protecting affordable housing right across the country.

The $40 billion that we have now put into the first ever national housing strategy is an important investment and the NDP in today's motion asks us to front-end load half of that into this calendar year and then just let the next nine years drift off to God knows where. When we build 100 units of housing in Sarnia, when we build 100 units of housing in London, or in Abitibi, when we build 100 units in Montreal or Toronto or Vancouver, if we do that year after year after year, we go from having 100 new units to 200 new units to 300 new units. If we do not back-end load housing programs, inflation and the growth of the program itself effectively de-houses the people we housed in the first year by the end of a 10-year program.

Every expert we consulted with from every university, every housing sector, every government provider, every non-profit agency said that if we put money on the table for housing, do not front-end load it, and to make sure we come in with a substantial investment and then make it grow over time as the housing sector grows. That is what we have done with the $40-billion investment. We are very proud to have done it that way because that is what is called listening to experts as we develop new policy.

I would also like to talk about the new homeless partnership strategy now called reaching home. The Conservatives have criticized that we have moved away from simply doing housing first. I will tell members what housing first did for young people. They had to be homeless, on the street, with no support for six months before that program would help them. We took the most vulnerable youth in this country and said that we are not going to help them until they have lived on the street for six months, and the few that came back, came back with more complications, more damage done to them, and more hardship. The cost to fix those problems was off the charts. One of the most critical things we heard as we reprofiled that money was to stop forcing young people onto the streets before government would step up to help them.

The same situation was emerging for women. Women who were escaping violence were told to go anywhere but the government, to get housing money somehow, but do not come to the government for help until they had been on the street for six months because the government would not help with the housing first program unless they had lived on the street. For young women in particular, it literally pushed them into the sex trade on the street. The most dangerous, most precarious, most violent situations encountered by women in this country are a direct result of a housing policy that refused to help people unless they had been acutely homeless for six months. That was wrong, so we removed that. We allowed the program to move into prevention as opposed to response.

We have also allowed communities to make the decisions for themselves as to whether they provide services that keep people housed or rent supplements to house people who have fallen onto hard times. That blend as we start to house people needs to be flexible so that local communities can solve the problems in a local way.

We are very proud to have changed that policy, but communities across the country know that if we are going to deal with addiction issues, or violence against women issues, or mental health issues, or brain injury, or all the other dynamics that cause much of our homelessness, we have to house a person first before we deal with those other issues. If we force people onto the streets for six months, all of those issues compound and get worse and quite often multiply.

I also want to talk about the fact that we doubled that money in the first year. We took it from $100 million to just over $200 million. We have now locked that in with provincial and federal agreements over the next 10 years. That is good news.

● (1530)

If the NDP members want to know what their approach was, they can check their platform. Their promise was to increase spending on the homeless by $10 million. That would not have solved the problem in any one of the major cities, let alone the new centres we are extending funding to as a result of our $40-billion, 10-year program.

Part of that program is the co-investment fund. This is one of the most innovative new proposals to come from a federal government in a generation. These dollars do not require matching grants from the provinces. We now have provinces—we heard about Saskatchewan—pulling out of the housing sector, literally pushing seniors on to the street by cancelling rent supplements. The new co-investment fund is not a program that flows to provincial capitals. The federal government will work directly with housing providers anywhere in Canada, including rural Canada, northern Canada, coastal communities, major urban centres, and small towns to realize housing projects that they bring forward. We work with municipalities in particular to deliver these programs.

This $13-billion is already building programs from coast to coast to coast. I spent my summer opening those programs. In fact, every time a member opposite stood up and said there is no housing in his or her riding, we listed the new housing that is being delivered as a result of the doubling and tripling of the funds that we have put on the table already as we move toward the $40-billion mark.

The other component to this is the Canada housing benefit. Previous governments used to attach subsidies to addresses and bricks and mortar. We have changed the approach in the Canada housing program. We have put the money into the hands of provinces, which deal directly with individuals. They are most likely to have the intimate relationship with those people to assess what their housing needs are and what the rental needs are.

The Canada housing benefit is now tied to people. If someone is living in a big town and a job is available across the city, the person can actually move the subsidy closer to the job and cut the transit time to make the new salary he or she is getting even more effective in supporting his or her life. If someone is living in a small town and wants to move to a larger town, or lives in a large city but wants to move home to take care of his or her parents but lives in public housing and sees an impediment to that, the subsidy can travel with the person. This gives people with low income the flexibility and the choice and agency in their lives.

We think this is an extraordinarily important investment. It starts in a year, because the provinces have asked for time to deliver the programs. However, that investment is substantial. It does force provinces to match, which is good, because if Saskatchewan pulls out, we are going to be making sure they move back into that sector.

The whole program is framed with an approach to housing called the right to housing framework. It is a human rights framework that effectively frames the program and requires Parliament to be held accountable if there are sectors of the population not being housed. We heard rural communities are having trouble getting funding. We know that certain populations do not get the housing they need. Veterans are an example in some parts of the country. People with significant disabilities are another problem in other parts of the country. We have targeted programs for some of those groups now, but as new groups emerge and the systemic failures in the system are presented to us through the housing advocate's office and the people with lived experience council we are putting together, we have a way of remedying those situations systematically to make sure we realize in a progressive fashion the right to housing.

No UN covenant, no UN official, and the UN rapporteur quite certainly have ever said the right to housing should be a charter right and so one prosecutes legally as an individual through a federal piece of legislation. What the UN talks about, what the UN rapporteur talks about, what our legislation is aimed at achieving is making sure we have a systemic approach to create a housing strategy and a housing response across the country to make sure there is a systemic way of measuring and assessing its strengths and weaknesses and a systemic method of remedying those failures when we see them, so we do not fail Canadians ever again.

The right to housing legislation will be presented to the House as soon as we have finished with the drafting of the presentation. We have done consultations all year on that.

Finally, on indigenous housing, we will not achieve reconciliation, we will not address and reduce significantly the poverty, we will not end the housing crisis in the country without four forms of indigenous housing. We have to have first nations housing on reserve strengthened substantially, and there are investments above and beyond the $40 billion to achieve that. We also have to meet with the Métis. The House heard in my questions today that there is a $500-million program with the Métis to achieve just that. We also have to sit down with the Inuit and specifically address through their council how they want housing built for their communities.

There are additional investments, close to $2.5 billion in last year's budget, that add to the $40 billion already committed. However, we absolutely, fundamentally must deliver an urban indigenous housing strategy. In Ontario, 80% of indigenous peoples live in urban centres. If we do not have an indigenous housing strategy for urban indigenous populations, we will never solve the housing crisis. We will never achieve true reconciliation. We will never solve the problems that colonialism, racism, and history have delivered to Parliament. On that file, I submit my unwavering commitment not to rest my voice until that urban indigenous housing program is funded equally to the rest of Canada's programs. In the interim, we have made every one of the programs I just described available to indigenous housing providers.

●(1535)

Previous governments said that one could only go through INAC to get indigenous money. The program that the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith talked about, which was a brilliant program, was funded through the innovation fund. These are additional dollars added to our indigenous housing commitments. We do not disqualify indigenous housing providers from a regular program, which is part of the way we are re-profiling dollars to ensure we house every Canadian and give them safe, affordable housing as part of a human rights approach to making our country fairer.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when is a right to a housing framework not a right to housing when it is a framework? Contrary to what the member alleged in the House, it is simply not fact.

This is what Leilani Farha, the United Nations Special Rapporteur, actually said:

> ...it is impossible to have a human rights based housing strategy that does not recognize the primacy of the right to housing as a legal right subject to effective remedies.

It is very clear. A right is only a right when it is binding in law.

How much longer are we going to hear from the Liberals, now in power for three years, that they are working on, thinking about, consulting on, and eventually we will have an urban aboriginal housing strategy? They have had three years. Then when we look at the funding that has been allocated, the vast majority will be released after the next election.

I wonder if the member would like to speak to that. Why do we not have that strategy right now?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, we do have the strategy right now. We did not wait for the housing strategy to be launched as a set piece over the next 10 years to double and triple our investments with the provinces, municipalities and indigenous groups immediately. In fact, close to $12 billion has been spent on new housing programs in the first two years of office. To put that into context, that is approximately $10 billion more than the NDP promised. It is real money for real housing. The NDP thinks we can build housing, I guess, with fairy dust.

The issue is this. On the right to housing, what the UN rapporteur talks about, and I have talked to her on a regular basis as we moved forward, is having a systemic approach that requires the government to provide a housing system that people have a right to access, that the system needs to be held accountable in a public way through Parliament and that the remedies have to force government into a position where we have to remedy those situations.

At no point have they talked about individual rights being assigned to Parliament. Those individual rights are covered through provincial law and provincial human rights codes and individual cases are managed under our system by the provinces. However, the national housing system we create needs to be held accountable. People have a right to expect it to meet their needs, but not necessarily deliver a specific house to a specific person in a specific way.

● (1540)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three points for the parliamentary secretary on this.

First, the portable housing benefit is up for debate. For some areas, including the greater Vancouver area, it was indicated that up to $250 perhaps would not close that gap whatsoever. I want to know what the parameters are on that, including those who choose to move from smaller communities to larger communities where their rent may double. What will the government's role be in that?

The second is about federal government lands. We talk about the federal surplus. Where is it and how is it being used?

The third, as the member asked me earlier, is on affordable housing. What is he going to do about affordable housing when we know that some of the housing markets have gone up from 25% to 75% across Canada?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the Canada housing benefit is an $8 billion program and it is spent through provinces. Provinces are designing how it applies to individuals. It is hard for us to say at this point exactly what that looks like because from province to province and territory it will be different.

However, what we said in the budget, the one the member referenced, was that this was the dollar amount that a person received and this was how many people would receive it. It was simply to try to put it in terms that individuals could understand, because $8 billion does not necessarily translate in someone's rent cheque very easily when trying to conceptualize that. Day by day, person by person it will be different. It will wrap around the person rather than simply be a one-size-fits-all program.

In terms of federal lands, it has been very frustrating. We received a list of federal lands when we asked the departments and on some of those lands there already was public housing. It just was not being used by the department. It was part of a 99-year lease to affordable housing providers in the city of Vancouver.

Getting the surplus piece down pat is absolutely essential. It is part of the $13 billion co-investment fund. We will be using federal lands, like we are in the city of Toronto on the waterfront, to deliver affordable housing to people as part of federal housing programs. It has been very successful.

The final piece of the puzzle to which the member references is housing affordability, which I think is the intent of her question.

As we see in the private market, where 80% of Canadians get their housing needs met, housing costs are being pushed beyond the reach of even semi-affluent Canadians. In the city of Toronto, the average one bedroom apartment rents for $2,300. It requires a $90,000 salary just to live in a one bedroom apartment. We need to focus in very clearly on this part of the market.

There are eligibility components to the program that allow for non-profit home ownership programs that are becoming more and more successful. We continue to work in this area, but it is a tricky area. If new purchasers are put into the market quickly, it will stimulate inflation. If we drop the price of housing quickly, Canadians will lose the equity they have in their homes. On that piece, there is work to be done.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to rise in the House and represent the people of Timmins—James Bay.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

I am going to begin on what maybe people think is a side issue, but it fundamental to it. It is the issue of children.

We just brought home the body of 13-year-old Karlena Kamenawatamin to Bearskin Lake this weekend. We lost a 10-year-old there last year. I mention her name because she died in a home with no electricity—in Canada.

We are going to talk about the mental health needs of children and ask how this crisis is happening. For a child to have no water and no electricity, she was ground into hopelessness and poverty.

Yesterday we received the report on the 12 children who died in Ontario foster care, six in three months, 12 in three years. I am going to name some of their names and tell some of their stories, because it pertains to what we are talking about: 12-year-old Amy Owen from Poplar Hill First Nation whose parents said she lived in so much pain that she was broken by the age of 12. Then there is 16-year-old Courtney Scott from Fort Albany, whose family and sister I met. What they went through in foster care is a horror story. Nobody defended those children and she died.

Chantel Fox and Jolynn Winter from Wapekeka were 12 years old, and the government was found culpable in their deaths by the Human Rights Commission because it did nothing to respond to the community's urgent pleas to help those girls.

Kanina Sue Turtle also died in care.

I do not have the names of the other children because they are protected.

The report tells us that these children grew up with inadequate shelter, unsafe water, lack of access to food and no access to equitable education or health and mental health services. It said that many of them lived in overcrowded houses without electricity or running water.

That is the face of the housing crisis in our country, like 13-year-old Sheridan Hookimaw from Attawapiskat, whose family I know so well. She was ground into poverty from the sewage backups and living with 21 other people in an overcrowded mould-infested home. She just gave up one day, could not live anymore, and died by suicide.

The cost of the complacency of this nation for the treatment of its children is being counted in the body bags that have flown home to Treaty 9 and all the other communities of the far north. It is the poverty that has ground them down.

If we go to Kashechewan, Attawapiskat and the other communities and go into the homes, we will smell the bleach, because the mothers and the ku-kums try to keep the homes clean for the grandchildren and the children. They are proud. The walls are full of pictures. When there is a graduate, those pictures are everywhere. However, if we look at the floor in the livingroom, everything has been moved out for the mattresses. There could be 18 and 21 people living and sleeping there at night. That is the nature of the housing crisis.

For government, it is always an issue it will deal with next year and the year after. It is going to have another INAC program. It is going to have another funding plan. The obligation to ensure that children in our country do not live in fourth-world conditions has never been a priority. It will never be a priority until we insist on the fundamental principle that housing is a human right, so that the 300 families in Kashechewan that have no homes, that live with their relatives and their cousins, or travel around and around trying to find a bed in that little community will have homes. That is the nature of the housing crisis.

We recently saw the government come up with all these solutions. One of them was that it would have a contest for first nations to find an innovative solution. What is this, *The Hunger Games*? The Liberals love this stuff. They have smart city challenges. One of their smart city challenges is they will use AI to help us deal with climate change. We have to love the Liberals. They are going to promote an app for homelessness so the homeless will know when the shelters are full. They are ridiculous. They think people are stupid. They announce they are going to deal with the housing crisis in the first nations. They are going to put $30 million away for the most innovative solution and work with them—winners and losers.

● (1545)

From having worked on this file for a long time, I can tell members that the impediment is not the people's innovation. The impediment is government bureaucracy and policy that time and again sit on projects that are good, that undermine self-financing projects in communities where people can go to the bank and get their own financing. Yet, they have to go through the minister of INAC because he acts like the great white father, who can sign off on their financial plan when they already have an agreement with the bank. We can have innovative housing, but one needs the government as a partner.

Therefore, to me, the idea that we are going to have a smart challenge for indigenous people to compete for the money is probably one of the most ignorant things I have seen from the government and shows its lack of respect.

I come here with many experiences on the issue of housing. I see it across my region. I see it with seniors who cannot move from the old housing their kids grew up in to affordable seniors housing. It does not exist. The waiting list is so long that people will die before they ever get one.

I worked in the urban centres in downtown Toronto with the homeless before Paul Martin killed the national housing strategy. When we were working with the homeless in Riverdale, in Toronto's east end, it was possible to get people into rooming houses. We still had rooming houses, and one could get someone sobered up, get them into cheap housing, then onto the list for social housing. There was such a turnaround in lives. I saw it. I spent every night of the week and the year at detox centres and emergency wards, and we were able to get people stable housing. They were not a burden on the system anymore. Some of the people I have known over those years went on to live very good lives because of housing.

At that time, when Paul Martin pulled out of the national housing strategy, the housing market was already beginning to change, as were the neighbourhoods in the east end of Toronto. Paul Martin, who was king of the private market, told us not to worry because the private market would step up. However, it did not step up, and we have seen a steady gap growing. My old neighbourhood of Riverdale had some amazing mixed income co-operatives, where single moms and university professors lived. Those were solid neighbourhoods. When I go back to my old neighbourhood now, it has become a neighbourhood of the super rich and the super poor. The balanced neighbourhoods we had are disappearing because people cannot afford them. They call it the "hollowing out" of these neighbourhoods.

The young people, who want to raise families and work in the city cannot afford to live there. I will give a shining example, coming from the musicians' community. There was a time when Toronto was the centre where all the bands came, and Montreal was sort of seen as the dance capital. Well, Montreal is the centre for music now. Why? Because there are no musicians who can apply their trade in Toronto and pay the rent, so all the young artists are moving to Montreal. We see creative communities no longer being able to live there because they have been forced out of the city.

What is the solution? It is mixed income housing. There will still be the private sector, but we need to have a commitment to housing to build co-operative and mixed income housing in order to maintain neighbourhoods where we can still have young families whose children can go to school and parents who work in the inner city. It also comes down to this fundamental notion that housing is a human right, which is something the government will not recognize. It talks about it.

Leilani Farha, the United Nations special rapporteur, expressed her deep concern about the Liberal government and what it is doing. Of course, the two great tricks of the Liberal Party in the last 150 years is, first, that it will break all of the promises it makes to first nation people as soon as the people turn their back. The second great trick of the Liberal Party that has gotten them into power time and again is to tell people to vote for them in the election because it will do something right, that if people return the party to power, it will look after them.

Liberals are now saying they are going to have a housing framework, but the United Nations special rapporteur says she is concerned that the government is not recognizing the right to housing in implementing legislation and will not recognize the primacy of the right to housing as a legal right subject to effective remedies. Until we have a government willing to commit to that, there is no reason to believe and vote for the Liberals, as people did in 1993, 1997, 2000 and 2003, as a result of that red book of promises, which is always just over the hill, just waiting for the next election, just waiting until the right moment as long as people re-elect them will get done.

If the government is serious, it will commit to that strategy as a human right.

● (1550)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge and pay respect to the member opposite for his strong and tireless advocacy on behalf of individuals, communities and treaty organizations of the indigenous people of his riding. We respect that and it helps us do our job better, even when it hurts sometimes to listen to the failures that all governments have delivered with regard to those communities.

In terms of the right to housing, let me assure the member that the UN special rapporteur on housing, Leilani Farha, and the minister and I are in constant conversation about how to get this right, to make sure that the right to housing is exactly what the UN expects of us and is consistent with the covenant we have signed. We will not stop working until we make sure we achieve that.

I have a very interesting question for the member opposite. New Democrats complain about our spending money, more money than they promised, and spending money well into the future, more money than they ever envisioned. When they put their platform together for the last election, their total commitment for this calendar year to all indigenous organizations across the entire country for critical infrastructure, which includes housing, water, schools, hospitals, everything, was $25 million. How can I take their tears seriously if $25 million was the extent of their imagination and response?

Would the member opposite not agree that $25 million is a pathetic gesture? Adding in one last piece of context, they were only going to do that if they could balance the budget.

● (1555)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, it does not really matter to me whether he takes my tears seriously or not. I do not cry for him. I cry for the children we lose, and I am never going to apologize for that. Our nation should be crying about that.

I have noticed over the years that when my hon. colleague is not picking fights on Twitter, he is always trying to find one line item that he can stand up on and say makes the Liberals better. He is looking at his line items and I am looking at their line items, where what they promised to indigenous communities is so underwhelming.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: We're better than you at keeping promises.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The poor member is an angry man. He is going to have to go back to Twitter to express himself.

When I look at what they promised first nation communities, it is not even close. I know the member believes that "rural" is anything north of St. Clair, but I would certainly invite him to meet the families in Kashechewan, and then he could see how pitiful the numbers he is crowing about and saying are a great standard for the world are actually a pitiful standard.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I deeply respect and admire the commitment by the hon. member to this very important file. I am from the city of Winnipeg. I am deep diving into some of the issues in his community and look forward to working with the hon. member to find solutions.

However, to say that we are not investing in indigenous communities is simply wrong. It is dead wrong. Our very first budget in 2016 had $8.4 billion in new money. Let me stress that it is new money over and above what was in existing budgets for housing, for infrastructure and for getting rid of the boil water advisories. In the Métis community of Saint Boniface, for the first time in history there is a $500-million commitment to Métis housing. I know the burden is so heavy and the challenges are so wide. We need to work together to solve these problems.

How can the member say we are not investing any more money when we have invested—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative government also invested money, but the Liberals made a great promise that they keep repeating, the $8.4 billion, the $8.4 billion. However, the majority of it is back-ended to the next election. If the Liberals are re-elected, they will get it.

On education, the first commitment the Prime Minister made was $2.8 billion in new funding, but the Liberals turned around and said there was no new funding because they thought the Conservatives had put money aside. The Prime Minister then turned around and shortchanged first nations children of $800 million, but they do not say that. What they are doing is back-ending money further and further into the future, and when people are not paying attention, that money gets repurposed.

With all of the money they promised the communities, I would ask him to talk to the grassroots because they will ask where all the great Liberal promises are. Just like other governments, money gets promised and gets repurposed. On education, housing and water, they are not getting the job done. In Grassy Narrows, where people cannot drink their own water, I would ask him where this great commitment is, because they do not see it on the ground.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am always honoured to rise in the House to discuss things that are important to my riding. It is also always nice to hear the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, who is an excellent speaker.

I have been representing the people of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for more than seven and a half years now. I have toured the riding, which is one of the largest in Canada. It covers more than half of Quebec. When I met with leaders in the Far North, indigenous or not, the first item on the agenda was always housing, without exception. I therefore find the motion moved by my colleague from Saskatoon West to be absolutely relevant because this is an urgent matter. I thank her.

● (1600)

[*English*]

I want to tell my colleagues first about a student in my riding. His name is Ken Cameron. His Inuktitut name is Papikatuk. Ken comes from the community of Salluit, about as far north as a person can travel in my riding. A couple of years ago, Ken was in secondary 4 when I spoke at his school. Yesterday, he reached out to me, asking why the government does not care about natives at all. Those are his words. Ken wants to know why the government is using the natural resources in his home while treating natives like "dirt". He wrote:

[*Translation*]

> You tried everything to become a politician in Quebec. When you talk about Quebec in general, do you think about the people in northern Quebec?

[*English*]

The population in the north continues to rise while northern communities have no additional housing. Established northern communities simply cannot accommodate this number of people, which is creating a dangerously high level of overcrowding in our communities. Many housing units have problems with mould, need major repairs or are simply too small for families.

The lack of housing in Inuit communities is at a crisis level. Just over 100 houses are built each year, but never enough to meet the housing needs of the region. Nunavik needs 800 units today to eliminate the housing shortage, and that number is not being addressed. A housing construction program needs to be established to eliminate the overcrowding in Inuit communities.

The Director of Public Health for the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services concluded in his report that "the problems of housing and overcrowding in Nunavik constitute a major risk factor for the population's physical and psychosocial health." His prediction came to pass in 2012, when there was an outbreak of active tuberculosis in Nunavik, with over 90 cases of the disease reported.

One year ago, the Prime Minister said that, "Housing rights are human rights and everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home". Those were his words. However, the government has not proven that statement to the members of my riding.

The NDP has long advocated for housing as a human right, in keeping with Canada's obligations as a signatory to the international treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Speaking of human rights, article 21 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes the following:

> Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Article 23 of the UN declaration states:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

The poor condition of the housing, overcrowding, major renovation needs and lack of suitability for traditional lifestyles in Quebec's far north have a devastating effect on Cree and Inuit communities. The inadequacies are changing the way of life. Overcrowding is associated with the spread of disease, higher rates of suicide and gender-based and family violence in those communities.

Many local leaders have already suggested solutions and innovative initiatives developed right in their communities. They only want to be consulted and given the support to implement them. We must apply a policy of free, prior, and informed consent to housing. Conditions cannot be improved in the north without having meaningful consultation.

Once people have appropriate housing, attendance at schools goes up and gender-based violence and suicide rates go down. A variety of social issues are addressed when people have secure housing.

The NDP is asking the federal government to forge a partnership with the first nations, Inuit and Métis to assess housing needs and design durable housing suited to traditional indigenous lifestyles and climate conditions. Culturally appropriate, on-site construction trades training would not only achieve these objectives but also help create jobs within the communities.

The remote nature of northern communities is not just their defining feature, it is often their most complicated problem. The north has an infrastructure deficit that many southerners do not consider. The vast majority of northern communities are inaccessible by road year-round.

Communities know what needs to be done, and we need to work with them. For example, Grand Chief Harvey Yesno, of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, said, "The ultimate goal is all-weather roads.... to network the communities.... a regional infrastructure strategy by both levels of government."

Ice roads can cost 60% to 70% more than all-weather roads and are substantially more dangerous to traverse.

Patterns of land use in northern communities have gone through extensive changes. This is intensified by southerners imposing ideas, imposing legislation and imposing regulations on territories and communities that face a very different reality than the south. Relocation, settlement and the introduction of a wage-based economy have permanently altered existing indigenous land use and cultural practices.

In Val-d'Or, we see a large shortage of affordable housing, making the cost of providing for one's family more and more difficult. Throughout northern Quebec, we hear the same stories. In Eeyou Istchee, there is a shortage of approximately 2,560 units. Members heard me right. That is 2,560 units to support northern Quebec James Bay Cree. Over the next 10 years, an investment of $1 billion is required for infrastructure to address the housing backlog and projected needs.

I am on a waiting list in my community of Waswanipi, and according to the rhythm of construction of houses in my community, I probably will not get my house before I am 82. That is a long time from now.

Let me conclude by saying that this situation has created many social problems in indigenous and northern communities. I wish to finish today by quoting my dear friend Cindy Blackstock.

"Children only get one childhood. They can't wait for studies.... The government knows what to do for this generation of children, they just have to get down and do it".

● (1605)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to stand in the House with the member opposite and hear his good words, his truth and his demand that we do better, and we have to do better on precisely the issues that were referenced.

I am asking this question not to take the focus away from the challenges in northern Quebec in different indigenous communities but in the honest pursuit of advice from a wise soul.

Urban indigenous housing programs are just as deficient, particularly in cities where a number of indigenous members of both the Cree nation and the Nunavut Inuit nation come south for school, for hospitals and for a whole series of reasons. There is not a structured way to get at providing housing through a first nations or Inuit or Métis lens in some of these communities in urban settings.

I wonder what my colleague's advice would be as we embark upon putting together that urban indigenous strategy. What would his advice be as a good way forward for us so that we could realize their housing needs in parallel with the housing needs he described in rural Quebec?

● (1610)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend for what is an important question.

One of the things I have said over and over in the past is that in any national housing strategy, there needs to be a distinct and clear indigenous component. That is important to do. This needs to be done in collaboration and in co-operation with indigenous communities and people throughout the country, those who live in urban settings. We all know that a very high percentage of indigenous people do not live on reserves but live in urban areas.

That is the importance of taking that component seriously and having a good discussion with indigenous people themselves.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague and neighbour, I often go to the largest city in his riding, Val-d'Or. Many indigenous people from the Lac Simon reserve end up moving there because it is the closest city and they want access to services, groceries and stores. However, this municipality has had one of the worst housing shortages in Abitibi—Témiscamingue for decades. Indigenous and non-indigenous people alike live in terrible, unaffordable housing.

If I told the hon. member that I was going to give him the number of housing units it would take to meet the needs of Val-d'Or, what would that number be?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that great question. I imagine she knows as well as I do how difficult things can be for indigenous people who decide to move to Val-d'Or.

We have done the math, and I can share some numbers. We need 2,560 units for Crees, about 1,000 for Inuit in Nunavik, and about 300 for the Lac Simon and Kitcisakik Algonquin communities. Kitcisakik has neither electricity nor running water despite being located right next to a hydro dam. This is 2018; this is Canada.

These are serious, urgent issues. That is why we moved this motion. The Liberal government's latest budget allocated $500 million over two years for indigenous communities. That would cover the construction of about one house in each of Canada's 600 communities. Construction costs in the Far North are so high, it might cover only half a house per year. That is why this motion is so urgent.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

I am happy to have this opportunity to speak to this motion today. Housing is a basic need, and I have no doubt that the importance of having this need met is recognized on all sides of this house. If we agree that all Canadians should have a realistic opportunity to own their own homes, and all Canadians should have access to safe and affordable housing, the question then becomes how we meet these goals. How do we empower vulnerable Canadians to help lift themselves out of poverty, and what action will have a long-lasting and meaningful impact?

To start, the very first line of this motion identifies a significant problem with the Liberal government's housing strategy. The problem is that 90% of the funding the Liberal government has announced is scheduled for far beyond the next federal election. This is not the first time we have seen this. There seems to be a pattern with the current Liberal government. The Liberals make a great big funding announcement with the intention of spending that money well beyond their mandate.

For the most part, what the Liberals have offered Canadians in their housing strategy are promises. Unfortunately, we know that failing to deliver on their promises is the norm. Therefore, action should be taken today in the medium term and in the long term to strengthen our communities. For this action to be successful, the federal government cannot go it alone.

The text of the motion we are debating today calls on the federal government to take specific action, but what it seems to be missing is the inclusion of the roles of other levels of government and the private sector in addressing housing needs in Canada. Social housing falls under provincial jurisdiction, and this is not recognized in the motion. The federal government certainly shares some of the responsibility when it comes to housing in Canada, but again, I would state that the exclusion, or even the downgrading, of the involvement of the provincial government from the motion before us is problematic.

Another concern that I know has already been raised by many of my colleagues today, but I would like to reiterate, is the language used in the text of the motion relating to housing being a human right. The legal implications of this language could be tremendous. The recognition of a right to housing in federal legislation again conflicts with jurisdiction on this issue. I would caution that its adoption could have many unintended consequences.

While this motion offers opportunities for the federal government to spend money, this approach is probably too simplistic. A discussion on access to safe and affordable housing must recognize that a need for housing is often a symptom of poverty. A fulsome debate must also consider poverty reduction and the barriers many face in lifting themselves out of poverty: education, addictions, health issues, disabilities and so on.

A strong economy is key to reducing poverty. In fact, a strong economy is key to making housing more affordable and accessible for all Canadians today and in the long term. First, any government-funded social program is dependent on a strong economy to ensure that funds are available in the long term. When the economy is succeeding, government revenues are available, but if we tax our economy to death and chase away investment and opportunities, the shelves will be bare for social programs. That is why it is so important to have a realistic plan, a plan to create jobs and opportunities for economic growth. Unfortunately, there is no such plan.

The Liberal government has been failing Canadians when it comes to the economy. Its high-tax agenda is chasing away business and investment opportunities. The energy sector is a perfect example of lost economic opportunity.

● (1615)

Prior to the current Liberal government, there were three private companies willing to invest in three pipeline projects. These projects would have created tens of thousands of jobs and generated billions of dollars in economic activity. However, now the Prime Minister's disastrous policies have chased away all of the investment interest. Not only is the government not succeeding in growing the economy, it is actually hindering it.

The average Canadian is paying more and higher taxes with less money in their pockets to spend on their priorities, which includes less money to spend on their rent or their mortgage. Canadians want to work, provide for themselves and make meaningful contributions to our communities. The federal government should not be creating barriers to that goal. Unfortunately, the failed policies of the Liberal government are hurting Canadians.

The availability of rental housing has also been part of the discussion today. If home ownership were encouraged and achievable for more Canadians, it would have the potential to address the vacancy rates in Canada for rental housing, but the Liberals have not encouraged home ownership. In fact, they have discouraged it. The current Liberal government made changes to mortgage rules that make it harder to qualify for a mortgage, and essentially make home ownership out of reach for many Canadians, particularly young Canadians. A federal housing strategy should also recognize the need for measures to increase affordable and responsible home ownership across the country.

When it comes to homelessness reduction, it is important to consider programs and strategies that have already seen some success. One such program is the housing first approach, which was introduced by our former Conservative government. This program reversed the traditional approach of addressing homelessness by providing a home first with no strings attached to a homeless individual and then made social programs and services available to them. The pilot program of this approach was successful in helping many move along the homeless continuum into independent housing and ultimately become self-sufficient. The success of this pilot program was followed with an expansion of it.

The expansion of the program and the housing first approach received widespread support from stakeholders across the country, including the support of the sponsor of the motion, the member for Saskatoon West. At the time, the member stated that, "We're most excited about the emphasis on housing first, getting people into safe, affordable housing and bringing support services around them so people can stay housed."

This program was helping Canadians through proven, evidence-based homelessness reduction programs. If a program is helping to reduce homelessness, it should be continued and even expanded. That is why I, like many, was discouraged when the Liberals diverted 65% of the housing first investment target to other programs. While the Liberals' housing strategy commits a lot of taxpayer funds to address the need for housing in Canada, there is a reason to question the strategy's ability to make real progress in this area.

I thank the member for Saskatoon West for tabling this motion and providing the opportunity to have this important debate. Moving forward with measures that will help provide a better quality of life for vulnerable Canadians and all Canadians should always be a priority. Access to safe and affordable housing is essential to a better quality of life.

As the federal government looks to address the housing need in Canada, the focus should be on proven and evidence-based programs. We need to identify and remove barriers from home ownership. We need to take concrete action to support the Canadian economy, and we must acknowledge and address the cause of the housing need and not just address the symptoms. We have to not only respect the provincial jurisdictions over housing, but also work co-operatively with other levels of government and the private sector.

As I said at the beginning, let us look at solutions that can be implemented today and not down the road.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. This is obviously an issue that the NDP cares a lot about. It is also particularly relevant to Longueuil—Saint-Hubert since housing is part of everyone's daily life.

I want to point out that this is the 10th anniversary of all of the social developments in the greater Longueuil area. There are three key founding members, namely Sonia Jurado, Mary Claire MacLeod and Hanh Lam. These three individuals were directly involved in absolutely fantastic projects, such as Terrasse Mousseau, a community housing project that is currently under way. It involves the renovation of 170 units that were in a state of complete disrepair. These homes were unfit to live in, but they are being fixed up little by little by relocating people, renovating the units and creating a new living environment. The project is currently in progress. We hope that everything continues to go well because it is a really well-run project.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the situation that she talked about at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

It is important to remember that, from 2006 to 2013, 45,000 social housing units were affected by the expiry of CMHC agreements. In 2017, the number of households affected was over 140,000. I am thinking, for example, of a woman I met through FRAPRU. She was about 82 years old. She told me that she had been evicted because she lost her social housing subsidy.

When will the CMHC get involved in that case? What does my colleague think about that, since it is her government that is asleep at the switch on this?

● (1625)

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if we had investments in our economy and we allowed the private sector to flourish, it would be generous. I see this in my riding of Battlefords—Lloydminster a lot. For example, there is a program called Habitat for Humanity. When we see the economy being allowed to prosper and grow, it gives back to communities. In my riding, even the town I live in, Lloydminster, we have many situations where housing works with the provincial government, and whatnot, and actually donates so people can have places to live. They literally get the keys and they can live there. Especially in Lloydminster, with the energy sector and lack of interest the government has in it, I have seen how that has affected the private sector being able to give back. However, when the private sector has that ability, it is very generous.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): I could not agree more with the point that was made by the NDP member with reference to the surrendering of operating agreements and the damage that did to people with disabilities, to seniors on fixed incomes and to the most vulnerable Canadians living in co-op housing. The fact that the Conservatives allowed those agreements to expire and literally booted people to the curb is unexplainable and unacceptable. That is why we renewed those agreements and have protected them going forward as part of the new national housing strategy. It is the absolute right thing to do for the most vulnerable Canadians who live in the best co-op housing in our country.

My question for the member opposite though is a different one. She has referenced that she does not like the change in profile for the homeless partnership strategy, now called "reaching home", and that we no longer require that all programs must spend 65% of the allotment on rent. The reason that was changed was very simple. In Quebec, for example, there are very strong rent supplement programs. It did not need new rent supplement programs. What it needed was supports for mental health treatment and for addiction treatment, meal programs for seniors and attendant care for people with disabilities. It wanted to use that money so people could afford to stay in housing they already had with the provincial supplements.

If we are going to respect provincial jurisdiction, does the member not agree we have to listen and give flexibility to a program, recognizing that housing first works? It is still absolutely an option. The province could spend 100% of the money, but it does not have to absolutely be 65% of it. Does she not agree that provincial jurisdiction should be respected and flexibility should be a cornerstone of this program, to allow local housing systems to meet the needs of the people who have housing requirements?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, an interesting point that needs to be taken into account is Canada is a very diverse country. Different areas have different socio-economic problems. In my own experience, especially in my riding of Battlefords—Lloydminster, I feel the government does not take that into account. We are not seeing any funding for any of this until after its mandate.

I alluded to this earlier today. Mental health, addiction and disabilities all need to be taken into account, but people are resilient and want to work. When they are given the opportunity to do that, when they are able to actually do it themselves and lift themselves up, that is a great success and shows the great resiliency that people have in them.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Essex, public services and procurement; the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, the environment; and the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, natural resources.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak to this NDP opposition day motion on housing. First, let me read the motion in its entirety:

> That, given that a housing crisis is raging in Canada and that 90% of the funding for the government's national housing strategy will only flow after the next election, and that much of the funding depends on collaboration with provincial governments and the private sector, the House call on the government to: (a) recognize the right to housing as a human right; and (b) bring forward 50% of the strategy's funding before the next election to invest in (i) housing for Indigenous communities, (ii) the construction of new affordable housing, new social housing units and new co-ops units, (iii) a plan to end homelessness, (iv) the renovation of existing social housing and old housing stock, (v) the expansion of rent supplements, (vi) the administration of programs that meet the special needs of seniors and persons with reduced mobility.

The Conservative Party believes that all Canadians should have a reasonable opportunity to own their own home or to have access to safe and affordable housing. That is why we support broad-based tax relief, income support programs and tax incentives to make home ownership and rental accommodation more attainable and accessible.

Rather than support these broad-based, grassroots initiatives, the current Liberal government seems intent on not only ignoring these willing small business partners but actually placing additional roadblocks in their way or even destroying their business altogether.

The Liberal war on small and medium-sized business will have a huge detrimental effect on the construction industry, and we are already seeing its effects. This will negatively impacts housing starts.

Small construction companies, whether pouring concrete foundations, framing and scaffolding, or installing heating and ventilation, and plumbers, electricians, and roofing contractors, many of whom are self-employed and are at the same time employing five or six workers, will be forced to lay off workers and scale back their operations. Worse yet, they may have to wind down their business altogether. This will result in fewer contractors available to build and therefore will drive up the cost of housing even higher than it is currently. So much for making housing available at a reasonable cost and free of barriers.

While I support the premise of this NDP opposition day motion to do all that we can to ensure proper housing, there are far too many questions left unanswered for me to support the motion.

The NDP have long advocated for the government legislating that housing become a right, but this approach attempts to simplify a very complex issue and ultimately will not solve the problem that we are facing in Canada.

It is our belief that the government should get out of the way of private enterprise and instead partner with respective jurisdictions of provincial, territorial and municipal governments and private business initiatives, and work with social agencies and non-profit organizations in dealing with housing needs.

This motion makes no mention of empowering local stakeholders or marketplace workers, who could potentially increase housing stock availability and therefore make housing less costly.

We agree with helping Canadians who need it the most. However, the government can help through partnering with all levels of government and the private sector to ensure the creation of sustainable, responsible and fair solutions.

This motion does mention the private sector, but only in the preamble. It then ignores it in the body of the motion when it comes to taking action to resolve the problem.

Last winter, during the Conservative caucus listening tour, I visited beautiful Sault Ste. Marie and sat down with local business owners, stakeholders and community members. My round table with real estate professionals was eye opening. I heard that the new regulations introduced by the Liberals are best described as "using a bulldozer to kill an ant". Housing markets in Toronto and Vancouver are different from Sault Ste. Marie, so it does not make sense that rules meant to cool down those hot markets would be forced on smaller northern communities.

People are working hard to save for a down payment on their first home and the government is making it much more difficult to be approved for mortgages.

Also last year, following consultations with real estate agents and mortgage brokers in Kitchener-Conestoga, I sent a letter to the Minister of Finance asking him to immediately reverse decisions he has made to make home ownership harder in Canada, especially for those looking to purchase their first home.

● (1630)

As part of that consultation, I was made aware of the website www.newruleshurt.ca. I encourage all my colleagues in the House to visit that website and read real life stories about how, under the Liberal government, home ownership has become a pipe dream for hard-working Canadians. It is really disturbing as most young married couples have a hope of purchasing their own homes, but that is increasingly less of a possibility for many of them.

I have spoken about how I have met with brokers, real estate agents and other people in the business of getting people into homes. Let me tell the House about a charitable group in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga that builds and helps to get people into affordable housing, MennoHomes.

Currently, MennoHomes owns and operates 105 units and it recently partnered with another group to create an additional 25 units in Waterloo. This organization partners with the region of Waterloo, the Ontario government and the federal government. It brings all kinds of private money to the table, partnering with other levels of government to leverage that money so they can actually create these units. In addition to creating the units, they have a personal support worker who helps those people who inhabit those units, to ensure they are able to maintain them and continue in them for a long time.

As I said before, I cannot support this motion. I believe the issue of affordable housing is best solved through private enterprise and incentives from government. I am grateful for MennoHomes and many others like it in the Waterloo region that work in close partnership to address this issue.

The real barriers to home ownership and affordable rental units are unnecessary government red tape, high taxes and the lack of incentives for the private sector to produce good quality, smaller housing units.

The strategies of the motion will not necessarily resolve the fundamental issue of the housing crisis, which is fuelled by the restrictive supply and government regulations. There needs to be assurance that people are able to move out of subsidized housing or subsidized rental units into market-rate housing and that they have the appropriate incentive to do so.

We need to ask what the reasons are for the housing crisis, which this motion says are "raging in Canada". I believe it is the economic policies, or it is probably better to say the lack of economic policies, of the government that are leading to the loss of jobs.

We have just heard today that there has been a 66% increase in investment in the U.S. in the last three years, but 50% less investment in Canada. We have also heard that over 100,000 jobs are not being realized as a result of the cancellation of energy east and the failure to get the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion under way. If my colleagues want to look at additional causes, 500,000 jobs potentially will be lost because of refusing or being unable to negotiate NAFTA. As of yesterday, possibly another 100,000 jobs will be lost if the tariffs on automobiles go into effect. These are all as a result of the failed economic policies of the government across the way.

Small and medium-sized businesses in Canada are very seriously considering relocating to the U.S. I hear this frequently in my own riding and in the region of Waterloo where small businesses that may employ eight, 10 or 20 people are actively being instructed or encouraged by their accountants to consider the possibility of moving if they are able to survive at all. That is a very worrying trend because not only will those businesses be moving but the jobs go with them. All of this leads to the ability to afford a house. If people do not have good jobs, it is very unlikely they will be able to afford a house for a long time.

Job creation needs to be at the forefront of any endeavour to reduce homelessness so people have the means and the incentives to improve their social standing, including access to good quality housing.

● (1635)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member rise a couple of times today and say that the real solution to the housing crisis is to get a job. The reality is that in Canada the two fastest growing groups that are having housing challenges and the largest growth in homelessness are children and seniors.

I know Doug Ford has some crazy ideas, but I do not think repealing child labour laws is on the agenda. I am going to hold my breath on that one.

However, for seniors, for 90-year old people who may need attendant care to live independently, to have meal services or to have people help them with functions because of their frailty they just cannot complete, is the Conservative Party really suggesting those people go back to work and get a job building a pipeline in order to get the housing they need? Is that really what I am trying to understand from the member opposite?

Obviously, for the bulk of people, 80% of Canadians get their housing needs met through the market. Obviously, a strong economy like the one we have produced, with 500,000-plus new jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years, is a good example of how to get those people housed.

On those two other examples, I will add one last thing. He is proud of housing first. Is he aware that his government, under housing first, would not fund rent supplements for people if attendant care was on the site? Does he understand the impact that had on people with disabilities? Does he understand the impact that it had on senior citizens? Does he understand how that de-housed people and forced them into shelters or into substandard care? Will he ever take responsibility for that, let alone his challenge to the child labour laws?

● (1640)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, it is almost comical to think that my colleague would suggest that children are buying houses. To infer that somehow I am keeping children out of housing by suggesting they get a job is ridiculous. We know we are talking about the parents of those children who need a job. Children do not go out and purchase homes.

What good does it do to promise hundreds of millions of dollars to be invested in housing 10 years down the road when, in the meantime, we create an economy that is leading to the loss of thousands upon thousands of jobs thereby putting people out of the housing in which they are currently living? That makes no sense.

When it comes to the housing first, Tim Richter from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness said:

> The Housing First philosophy and Housing First programs are essential to preventing and reducing chronic homelessness, in fact, we won't prevent and reduce chronic homelessness in Canada without it.

That is pretty high praise for a program that the Conservative government initiated and was doing a great job. In my own area of the Waterloo region, I have countless examples of how housing first helped dozens of people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for sharing his point of view, although it reflects a bit of an alternate reality. It is possible to see things from another perspective.

I would remind members that for Quebeckers who need social housing, it was Paul Martin's Liberal government that decreed that every Canadian had a right to suitable housing and decided to take action in that direction. The situation has only deteriorated since then. When it comes to funding for social housing, it has been nothing but a downward spiral.

According to FRAPRU, the right to housing is the cornerstone to ensuring that a number of other rights are respected. It can help meet many other needs, which is consistent with my colleague's vision regarding housing first. However, that is not the reality. At the Longueuil municipal housing bureau, the wait list for social housing is not counted in weeks or months, but rather in years. No joke.

We hear the Liberals crow about their royal benevolence on every possible issue and towards all of their subjects in Canada.

Did the parliamentary secretary or the Minister of Families bother to meet with the people who walked for four weeks with their backpacks, sleeping in school gymnasiums every night, to reach Parliament Hill? Do they not think that perhaps they should have met with those people?

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things to respond to there.

I agree with the first part of the NDP motion, which points out that the lion's share of the promised funding for the housing strategy that the government announced with great fanfare will not even be possibly implemented until after the next election. Therefore, it is pretty rich to try to pretend we have solved the housing problem by promising money down the road.

If we look at the track record of fulfilling promises by the government, I could go on for another 10 minutes and list many of the broken promises from only three years ago let alone looking at a program that telescopes into the future 10 years.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to share with the House that, yet again, View Magazine in Edmonton has chosen me to be its favourite member of Parliament in Edmonton. It is a great honour and I am humbled by it.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Essex.

I too will speak in support of the call of my colleague, the member for Saskatoon West, for rapid action on housing and homelessness, particularly the aspects raised in this motion, which are that 90% of the funding for the government's national housing strategy will not flow until after the next election and that most of the funding depends on collaboration with provincial governments and the private sector. However, equally so, my concern is that the government still refuses to honour proposals by my party.

Some of my colleagues tabled proposals in the House to make the right to housing a human right. The New Democrats will continue to raise that matter. I hear from my colleague across the way that Liberals are working on that, thinking about it and consulting on it. I am hoping to hear an action word on that before the end of the year.

According to Homeward Trust, a mechanism that deals with a lot of the problems with homelessness in my city, the number of people experiencing street homelessness was reported to have decreased substantially since 2008 when the numbers were at an all-time high. However, according to a 2016 homelessness count in my city, almost 2,000 people were still experiencing homelessness and indigenous individuals were nine times more likely to experience homelessness. I point that out because it is my understanding that the constitutional obligation to respect the rights of indigenous Canadians is not restricted to those living on reserve, but indigenous Canadians no matter where they live in our country. Seventy-four per cent were male, 25% were female and 48% were identified as indigenous, yet only 5.4% of Edmonton's overall population identify as indigenous. That is of deep concern.

There is a critical need for housing to be provided to indigenous Edmontonians and the numbers are rising. Edmonton has one of the largest populations of indigenous people in Canada, and it is terrific to have them. Yesterday, we honoured a Métis poet from Alberta, who is a Rhodes scholar. It is important that indigenous Canadians also be provided the opportunity for decent housing.

Twenty-nine per cent of the homeless population is under the age of 18 in Edmonton. Women make up 40% of those provisionally accommodated. Apparently that means people who are couch surfing. Three per cent were recent immigrants or refugees, which is reprehensible, and 70 people were veterans of the military or RCMP. However, based on my personal observations during the heat wave this summer, I was delivering clothing to one of the homeless shelters, the Bissell Centre on the north side of the river, and to my horror, I discovered several hundred people trying to sit in the shade to get out of the heat.

I went home and came back with cases of water, only to discover the new Mustard Seed shelter across from my office also had 50 to 100 people trying to seek some kind of shelter from the heat. Right now, the Mustard Seed is trying to get support for the only housing shelter for the homeless on the south side of the river, an ongoing struggle. It is not enough just to give money. We need community support that would benefit those less fortunate.

Julian Daly, who is the executive director of the Boyle Street centre and has been delivering services for the homeless for decades, also contests these lower numbers. He says that based on his direct observance, the need is far greater than the one-off counts. In 2016, he advised the count could merely be seen as anecdotal and did not reflect what workers saw on the front lines. They found 800 people living rough in the river valley, a 43% increase, and from my experience because I live in the area, most of them are indigenous. He also suggested another key indicator of the homeless was the doubling of people using Boyle Street Community Services as their mailing address. Therefore, they have no place to even receive mail. It is difficult to seek employment when people do even not have a place to receive mail. When applying for jobs, people have to give a street address.

● (1645)

That same year, Homeward Trust officials expressed concern about the low reported number of homeless; they thought the numbers were much higher. People in a wide range of occupations in my city, including restaurant servers, retail clerks, hairstylists and barbers, cannot afford even a one-bedroom apartment on their single incomes. Regrettably, a lot of apartments are being converted to condos and very few of the private developers are interested in building rental properties. They want to build the condominiums because they are easier to sell.

A diverse mix of Edmontonians experience homelessness, including young men, families, teenagers and seniors. In 2014, children and youth under 24 accounted for 29% of the homeless. At one point, working families were actually camping in our city parks. Matters have improved since then, because we have a dedicated mayor and council, but that is how critical it was, even in a province known to be one of the wealthier ones.

In 2009, the City of Edmonton, to its credit, launched a 10-year plan to end homelessness, and it outlined a number of initiatives to lower homeless numbers, including providing housing options and reducing shelter use, yet as reported in 2016, the demand for affordable housing has more than tripled since 2014. The waitlist for the group that provides social and affordable housing now sits at 4,300, compared with just 1,200 in the fall of 2014. In March 2016, the Alberta government, to its credit, changed the rules for those applying for affordable housing. Albertans now no longer need to declare their disability or education savings plans as part of asset testing. It is much easier now for them to claim some kind of a subsidy for affordable housing.

It is important to also hear from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Its members have said:

> Housing is more than just a roof over your head. Safe, affordable housing makes our cities and communities welcoming places to live, work and start a business. It's also important to retaining workers and attracting newcomers to enrich our neighbourhoods and drive economic growth.

The federation commended the government for the announced November 2017 national housing strategy, saying that it responded to the federation's recommendations. However, this past May, Canada's big-city mayors, chaired by my mayor, Mayor Don Iveson, again issued the priority call for federal financial support for municipalities. Top of their list was support for affordable housing. Despite major commitments from Ottawa and a number of key issues, Mayor Iveson advised that municipalities were still waiting for results, particularly on affordable housing. He said:

> On paper we've made huge progress with the national housing strategy, but none of us have actually seen any dollars flow yet from that strategy into our communities.

He added that decades of underfunding had created an acute backlog of social housing. Although Iveson noted that the federal government had "stemmed the bleeding" in recent years by reversing the cuts, the mayor and others have raised the concern that the budget before this one, the 2017-18 budget, was a lost opportunity. He said:

> The housing crisis, particularly in our largest cities, continues to be a sore spot.... We haven't been adding to the social housing inventory in this country for really 20 years in any substantial way so that backlog is real.

The mayors of Canada's biggest cities say they do not need the federal government to pony up more money for affordable housing units; they just need the cash to move faster.

As others have noted in the House, we look at the chart in the budget, and yes, there is some money in this budget but the vast majority, 90% of it, will not flow until the next election. Not just the big city mayors but the mayors of smaller communities and rural areas and indigenous leaders are saying that a good part of that money ought to be released now. We are calling for at least 50% of that money now. They have expressed concern that the Liberals' housing plan outlines billions in federal cash and matching funds from the provinces and territories, but much of the money will take years to flow.

The big city mayors caucus has pressed the finance minister to loosen the federal purse strings so that money for repairs is spent in the coming fiscal year while details are worked out in cash for new construction.

There is a great appreciation from the co-ops. I have a lot of co-ops in my riding. I am very proud that the vast majority of co-op housing has been built and operates in my riding. We have co-op housing for the artistic community and for the disabled. There is a Ukrainian co-op. Co-ops are providing very important housing.

● (1650)

They really appreciated the agreement to continue that funding, but there is the concern that still there is not going to be that additional funding to continue to support low-income people in that housing.

During questions, I will be happy to share many of the incredibly innovative programs in my city alone that could move forward expeditiously if we can simply flow that federal cash more expeditiously.

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her award from Vue magazine and her passion for homelessness and affordable housing.

In my city, we have had an issue with homelessness and affordable housing. However, I was very proud of the hon. minister coming to Calgary and making an investment in the community of Glamorgan of $13.1 million in an affordable, accessible housing project in that city that is directly related to our national housing strategy. Therefore, I can tell the member that the money is beginning to flow and that those plans are moving forward as quickly as we are able.

I was struck by what the hon. parliamentary secretary to the minister stated. Our plan going forward is to build capacity for affordable housing structures and to build capacity with groups, but ensure that we do not spend the money right up front, because that will leave a gap and leave our non-profits and other affordable housing institutions unable to cope. Was the member struck by that argument? Does she not see the logic in us proceeding in this fashion?

● (1655)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, on capacity, here is a simple example.

There is a partnership between the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and a construction company in the capital city region where they are giving low-income Edmontonians living in affordable housing an opportunity to train as apprentices. They are building a new affordable housing project in the Londonderry neighbourhood in northeast Edmonton. I know that a lot of indigenous communities are keen to develop the skills so that they can be building quality housing in their own communities.

I think that it is high time that the government, when it sets the parameters for the next contracts to build housing, particularly for affordable housing and particularly in northern and indigenous communities, set parameters so that the housing is sustainable and energy efficient, because one of the highest costs for those communities is the energy bill, and they are suffering with diesel oil contamination. As I recall, that matter has been in the budget for a long time, and we have not yet seen those dollars delivered.

Those are the kinds of initiatives I would like to see in building capacity.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment quickly on the last statement by the member opposite about energy efficiency and the housing program.

Under the national housing strategy, all new builds would be required to obtain 25% above building code in energy efficiency for precisely the reason the member highlighted. Not only does it create durability and better housing build practices, it also reduces the cost of affordable housing. Also, because 60% of greenhouse gases come from the residential sector, it makes a huge contribution in reducing greenhouse gas in the atmosphere. Therefore, it has been built into the housing program. One would not qualify for dollars if one cannot show energy efficiency. Some housing providers have complained that is a bureaucratic problem, but on the environment, we have to make those achievements.

I also want to be very clear that we did not wait for the national housing strategy to make investments. We spent $12 billion in our first two budgets on new housing programs, new housing starts, repairs and renewing the operating agreements. However, at the end of 10 years, yes, $40 billion more will be spent. In fact, we added close to $2.5 billion in the last budget and so the housing budget is even bigger than $42 billion. When the new additional indigenous housing programs come online, like the $500-million agreement we have with the Métis, we will see those numbers grow, and the housing system is going to continue to grow. We are very proud of the fact that we are building much larger systems.

No expert told us to front-end load the money. All of them told us that we have to build the program, sustain the program and sustain in particular the subsidies. Will the member opposite agree—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that at least the member is interested in the federal government encouraging more energy efficiency, but why the heck has it not restored the eco-energy retrofit program? I know every home in my riding would welcome the infusion of dollars so they too could reduce their energy bill and make their homes energy efficient.

I used to sit on the environment committee, and we heard that the updated energy efficiency provisions in the national building code are not going to be in place until 2030. I am troubled by that. Could we please speed that up so that any new housing being built actually meets higher standards and we can save dollars for Canadians.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to rise to speak to our NDP motion from our wonderful colleague, the member for Saskatoon West.

Canada is facing an unprecedented housing crisis. Housing prices are exploding. I see it in my riding of Essex in all the small communities. What is happening in Toronto is starting to come down to southwestern Ontario. The cost of homes are becoming unaffordable for families. Bidding wars are happening, changing the entire affordability of homes, but also putting so much out of reach for young people and young families that want to fulfill the dream of owning a home and having something stable for themselves. We see rents increasing. There are competitions for rental units now, something we had never seen down in our region. It is really starting to come to us in a big way.

I certainly recognize that this has been an extreme challenge for Vancouver, Toronto and larger cities, but this is reaching rural Ontario and rural Canada. It is no longer just a housing crisis in big urban centres. This is impacting everyone.

We are talking about rural communities where there is very little access to transportation. There are fewer opportunities for employment. Not being able to find affordable housing or rental space is a challenge most folks cannot overcome. Unfortunately, they end up leaving communities where they have grown up, where their family, friends and support base are, because they are simply priced out of living in the towns they grew up in. That is unacceptable.

There is such a long wait-list for non-market housing, and the homelessness rate is increasing as well. There has been quite a conversation going on in Windsor about the increase in homelessness on our streets. In our municipal elections, there have been folks talking about the way to address this. What we think of as big city issues around homelessness, affordable housing, affordable rental units, and availability are becoming issues for everyone in Canada. That is certainly true in my riding of Essex.

Action on the housing crisis is needed now. The lack of affordable and adequate housing is very troubling, but it is unacceptable that in a country as wealthy as ours, we have all of these people with so much wealth desperate for affordable housing. Housing is a right.

There are measures taken by the government, but it does not seem to understand the urgency of this situation for people who are struggling to afford their homes, or to even find a home that is affordable.

I think of my wonderful legislative assistant, Melanie Sanderson, who is spending her last days with us here in the House. She is moving out to B.C. with her husband, Matt and her one-year-old daughter Violet to join the B.C. government. She will be missed horribly. A hard part of her leaving and going to this wonderful new opportunity has been trying to find housing. In Victoria, trying to find affordable housing for a young family is next to impossible. It is completely out of reach. They find themselves in a situation where they are going to have to live with some family members for a while.

This is what is becoming the reality for this generation and the next generation of families in Canada. They have to seek alternatives to housing because there are no affordable rental units available. There certainly are no affordable homes available. They are being priced out of what in the past was something it was accepted that families would do. When I was married and had a young family, people would get a home. It is a step in life. One goes to school, has a family and a home. That step is being removed entirely for our next generation. That step has been pulled out from under them by the government and its lack of action.

The idea that there is some type of housing support that is coming before the next election, before many years beyond this, is ridiculous. Families are not fooled by that. They hear the words of the government. They hear the intention, but they are not seeing it backed up by action and the resources necessary to make it a reality. That worries me for so many families across Essex who are struggling to find housing. We simply do not have enough affordable housing, and it is a challenge to find space. With the cost of real estate going up, if we do not start investing in affordable housing, in co-op housing, in housing that will help people at their most vulnerable, even shelters, then what are we doing?

● (1700)

This is simply a broken system. Addressing the concerns of Toronto is not good enough in Canada. We need to address the concerns of rural Canada from coast to coast to coast, including our indigenous communities. We need to have a plan that will address everyone's concerns, not a small number of people who certainly are suffering under the issue of affordable housing, there is no denying that.

It really is disheartening to see all of this funding being pushed way far out. It is very difficult for people who hear the words of the government and have some hope, who think that the government hears that they are struggling for housing, yet nothing ends up happening. There are no resources to come to Essex, to come to southwestern Ontario, to come to regions that desperately need it. What the government is presenting as its housing plan is simply not acceptable.

I want to go back a bit and talk about housing as an investment. Safe and consistent affordable housing brings dignity to the lives of people. A safe home is also a bedrock for families. It is where families can focus on finding a good job, getting education, raising their families and so much more. That is what I want for families in my riding of Essex.

I will tell members a little about Windsor-Essex and the low income we have there.

In 2013, a national household survey showed that our low-income population was at a rate of 18.3%, compared to 13.9% across Ontario and 14.9% nationally. We are well above these averages. Therefore, we already have a very vulnerable population in our region.

In a 2010 study, in Windsor, 33.3% of low-income households were located in very low-income neighbourhoods. This is the highest percentage across Canada. Poor housing options are a vicious cycle that is almost impossible to break out of, especially for our youth.

We could have a conversation about the challenges that face our youth, such as affordable education and finding good jobs in our communities. To then face the ultimate challenge of not even being able to have a roof over their head is something that is driving young people in my region out of their home communities and away from their families, which is heartbreaking.

I want to say that gender also plays a role. We are here celebrating gender equity this week across Canada. There is no place that economic division in Canada is split more widely than it is among gender lines. The inequality is all the more striking when we talk about housing statistics. In 2010, a study found that in Windsor-Essex 41.8% of female-led, lone-parent families lived in poverty. That is more than three times the general population for our region.

We have a crisis of poverty in our region. We have one in four children living in poverty in Windsor-Essex. Housing is such a basic right for people, regardless of their income. However, those who are the most vulnerable are the ones who suffer the most when we do not have a comprehensive strategy to ensure that people have a roof over their heads in our country.

Seniors are living on fixed incomes. I think about Jim in my riding who is living in co-op housing. Jim has a small pension. He was living in co-op housing when the current government raised the GIS, which he also is receiving. It raised the GIS by such a small amount, and on the heels of that happening the co-op housing raised his rent. Therefore, Jim ended up with $5 extra a month to go and have a Tim Hortons coffee. It is unacceptable. Our most vulnerable, our seniors, our senior women are filling our shelters because they are homeless. They have nowhere to go. Affordable housing is completely out of their reach. They are receiving the bare minimum. Many of them are widows. Because many of our manufacturing facilities have closed in southwestern Ontario, they have pennies on the dollar of their husbands' pensions. Keeping their home is paramount to their health, and to the health of all of our communities.

We owe Canadians the right to housing in our country.

● (1710)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. colleague's argument is that there is a right to housing, is there also, therefore, a right to adequate transit? The reason I ask is that housing is not so much an issue where I come from, but adequate transit is. People cannot get to and from Scarborough in any kind of efficient fashion comparable to other parts of Toronto. I want to know whether the member would also argue that if housing is a right, adequate transit is also a right.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, I think the member should perhaps ask his own benches that, but transportation is incredibly important to rural communities and to communities across our country.

If the member is not experiencing the crisis in housing in his region, he should count himself fortunate. As I said in my statement, I did not ever imagine that it would reach my region, with its very small rural communities. I have five municipalities in my region. We are in Windsor-Essex, which is a very affordable place to live, by all accounts, but my fear is that it will touch every corner of Canada.

I would challenge the member, because most communities have vulnerable people who are struggling for housing. They may not be people we see every single day, but I believe that there are people out there in every corner of Canada today who are struggling for the right to affordable housing. The affordable piece is so important, because there may be housing, but people may be unable to access that because they are receiving a very small amount of money monthly. If they are widowed, if they are seniors, or if they are young people, the ability right now to get a good job or to live off a pension is very difficult.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member lives in the same part of the world I do, in southwestern Ontario, which is being so highly impacted by the NAFTA negotiations. I know that she is working on that for all the auto workers.

We know that the government just cannot get the job done with NAFTA. Does the member feel that they just cannot get the job done when it comes to housing? Is she hearing from constituents who are losing their houses or are in angst due to the fact that they cannot negotiate themselves in this trade deal?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, certainly there is great insecurity in my community in Essex in southwestern Ontario. Across manufacturing as a whole, there is great insecurity.

I was an auto worker of 20 years, and I was laid off in 2008 when the economic downturn came. I saw many of my very dear friends handing in keys, saying that they could not afford their homes. They were priced completely out of having homes.

There is an idea that people who are working can afford a home, and that is not true. Certainly across manufacturing, wages have been driven down because of poor trade agreements and because of decisions that have been made by governments in the past. Wages have not increased with the cost of living.

We have an entire group of people who are the working poor in Canada who are working every single day, some of them at two and three jobs, doing their utmost to put food on the table and to have a roof over their families' heads. It is becoming increasingly difficult. Ninety per cent of the announced funding from the Liberal government for the national housing strategy will only flow after the next election. That is unacceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, October 2, 2018, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

I see the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on his feet, perhaps on a point that will be of some interest to the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I expect if you were to canvas the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30, the time for private members' business.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.) moved:

That the House: (a) reiterate its commitment to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access to care, since every year more than 250 people, out of the 4,500 on waiting lists, die without receiving a transplant; and (b) urge the government to support national efforts with provincial and territorial authorities and stakeholders to increase organ and tissue donation rates in Canada through public education and awareness campaigns, ongoing communication and the exchange of information, including best practices.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today in the House to speak to Motion No. 189 on organ donation. This motion to establish an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system is above all a matter of empathy, altruism, human generosity, and respect for both life and death.

Organ donation is one of the greatest possible gestures of human solidarity. It reconciles the irreversible side of death and the beauty of life by giving those waiting for a donation a second chance. This is a very sensitive human issue that must be approached with respect. Organ donation goes against certain beliefs and challenges certain ideas. I would like to say a little more about that.

Organ donation has many outcomes and possibilities. It can be as extraordinary as delaying death, restoring sight, repairing tissue, or even carrying out a face transplant, as we saw with the recent case in Montreal, a Canadian first. These medical feats have one objective: to make life as normal as possible for those who have sustained lifelong injuries and been deprived of what matters most, namely their health.

Speaking of firsts, I had the honour of meeting Diane Hébert, the first person in Quebec to receive a heart-lung transplant. She lived in Lorraine, the town that I have lived in for 25 years and that I have served as town councillor and mayor.

Ms. Hébert's story was known across Quebec. This woman overcame many challenges and was an exception to the rule. She had been given two years to live, but the transplant gave her a new lease on life that lasted more than 25 years.

After recovering, Ms. Hébert made it her mission to raise awareness of organ donation. As a result of her work, in 1987, the Quebec health card became the official organ donation card in the province. Ms. Hébert inspired me and was behind my commitment to promote organ donation.

Every year, there are 4,500 Canadians awaiting an organ transplant. These people live in hope of getting healthy, being active again, contributing, participating in everyday activities, or simply being able to appreciate the small things in life, like everyone else, before their lives and those of their loved ones are turned upside down by illness.

Unfortunately, too many people today will still not find a compatible donor. Of the 4,500 sick Canadians who are waiting for an organ donation, 250 die every year because a donor is not found on time.

Motion No. 189 is therefore especially important for those people and for anyone who may need an organ donation in the future. They will have a better chance of survival with the improved system that is called for in this motion, because progress is not being made quickly enough to help the thousands of Canadians who are waiting for a transplant that will improve their health or even save their lives.

Although the number of donors has increased substantially over the past 10 years, there is still work to be done to realize Canada's potential in organ donation and transplantation. Despite the growing number of donations in Canada, the deceased donation rate in Canada is still two times lower than in some of the highest-performing countries, such as Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. What is more, living donor rates per million population in Canada remained stagnant or declined slightly between 2006 and 2015, from 17 per million population in 2006 to 15.7 in 2015.

● (1720)

Our system cannot meet current and future patient needs. For example, 75% of individuals on the wait list are waiting for a kidney, and the median wait time for a kidney is four years, ranging from 5.7 years in Manitoba to three years in Nova Scotia.

That brings me to my next point: donor rates vary greatly from province to province. Here are the numbers for 2015: between 250 and 300 donors died in Ontario; about 150 died in Quebec; 100 died in British Columbia; and fewer than 50 died in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador. This disparity results in an inequitable organ donation system for Canadians.

Consent is another major limiting factor in our existing organ donation system. Only 20% of Canadians have registered as donors, even though 90% of them say they support organ donation. Moreover, in 10% to 15% of cases, families withdraw consent when the potential donor dies because they had not been informed of the donor's wishes.

On Tuesday, the Standing Committee on Health, on which I sit, tabled a report on organ donation in Canada that was unanimously adopted by all members of the committee. The committee's study highlighted the importance of a strong organ donation and transplantation system for improving the quality of life of many Canadians.

In light of what we heard from experts, researchers, provincial organizations, and health organizations, we realized that there is still a lot of work to be done to realize Canada's potential in organ donation and transplantation. We must do better at meeting current and future patient needs for organ donation, especially since these needs vary significantly across the country.

Motion No.189 calls on the government to reiterate its commitment to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access to care. The variation in organ donation rates from one province to another is the result of varying capacities and resources across jurisdictions to implement best practices in organ donation.

Provinces such as Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec are pioneers in Canada. In other provinces, programs and services for organ donation after death are practically non-existent. The factors that contribute to higher donation rates in certain provinces are the following: mandatory referral of a deceased donor, presence in hospital of organ donation specialists who must account for the effectiveness and quality of the system, optimized programs for diagnosis of neurological death and cardiac-circulatory death, and the systematic application of sophisticated practices.

The differences in programs and services offered by the provinces result in unequal access to care and missed opportunities for organ donation when the occasion arises because of the lack of potential donors. That is why this motion urges the Government of Canada to support national efforts with provincial and territorial authorities and stakeholders to increase organ and tissue donation rates in Canada. It is unfortunate and completely unacceptable that the probability of receiving an organ donation is dependent upon the patient's place of residence in Canada.

Motion No. 189 also addresses the improvement of ongoing communication and the exchange of information between provinces, including on best practices. Even though organ donations and transplants in hospital fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the federal government can and must play a role by promoting the sharing and implementation of best practices or the essential components of highly effective organ donation systems that exist in certain provinces, so that in the near future face transplants are done not only in Quebec, but also across Canada.

● (1725)

Motion No. 189 also calls on the government to encourage organ donation through public education and public awareness campaigns.

As I said, one of the limitations of our organ donation system is consent. This can change through education, awareness, and knowledge of the right information. It is crucial for donors to understand the importance of their action and their commitment. It is not enough for people to sign the back of their driver's licence or health card. They also have to talk to their loved ones. We have to raise awareness among donors and their loved ones. We all have this amazing ability to be organ donors.

There are some myths surrounding organ donation that contribute to the statistic indicating that only 20% of Canadians have expressed their willingness to be a donor. Some believe that their age might prevent them from being an organ donor or that donating organs will have an impact on the hospital services they are offered.

That is why this motion seeks to share reliable information between all the key players while making public education a priority, a cornerstone of an effective organ donation program.

I will give an example showing just how generous Canadians are. At the time of the terrible tragedy involving the hockey team in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, one of the victims had registered as an organ donor, which helped save six lives. Shortly afterwards, there was a sudden and considerable spike in donor registrations in Canada, with nearly 100,000 new donors.

Motion No. 189 calls for more education campaigns to encourage public conversations and the exchange of information, especially with our families, friends and loved ones. This is a social issue that concerns all of us. Real efforts need to be made to increase awareness of organ donation so that it becomes a natural reflex, including when we are talking about our own deaths.

Despite current efforts, of the 4,500 people waiting for a transplant in Canada, approximately 250 die every year. I truly believe that we need to do better to save those whose only hope is an organ donation.

I want to thank all the individuals, organizations and stakeholders I spoke with regarding organ donation and this motion. I would like to emphasize that Motion No. 189 transcends all partisan politics. In fact, I have been assured of support from all sides of the house, and I would like to thank all hon. members in advance.

The last thing I want to ask of my hon. colleagues, besides their support for Motion No. 189, is that they register as an organ donor, if they have not already, and that they speak with their families about their wishes. If, by chance, they also know someone who would like to register, we could spread our message even further, right across the country.

I thank my hon. colleagues in advance for their interest and the thoughtful discussion we are about to have.

● (1730)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in February 2016, the Conservative member for Edmonton Manning, whose son had three liver transplants, introduced a private member's bill that sought to create a national registry and a national strategy for organ donation. This bill was introduced a number of times in the past by Liberal and NPD members. Unfortunately, the member opposite voted against that bill.

A study was done in committee. The motion the member is presenting is worthwhile but non-binding.

Why did he refuse to support the bill introduced by the member for Edmonton Manning, which contained more binding measures regarding organ donation? That bill could have helped advance this cause.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her excellent question.

I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Health from the start. We change as we participate in debates and sit on committees.

The information gathered in the context of the report that was released helped develop our perspectives. That is how we realized that we needed to make improvements and move forward.

Yes, this is a motion. Yes, I did have the choice to introduce a bill that would be more binding. However, organ donation is an extremely sensitive topic that involves both provincial and federal jurisdictions. That is the type of leadership that I am looking for in this motion. That is the purpose of the motion.

I hope that this motion will help advance this cause and lead to a consensus on sharing information between the provinces and the federal government.

[*English*]

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for tonight's motion. It really means a lot to me as a strong advocate, as the member is as well.

I understand that about one in five families say no to the wishes of their loved ones to donate organs. Does the member have any thoughts on why it is that such a high number of families would say no to the wishes of their loved ones?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite, a fellow member of the Standing Committee on Health, is absolutely right. We have to educate people.

One in five families says no to organ donation at a time of great sadness. Through organ donation, death can give the gift of life. If the donor's wishes were not properly explained or the donor did not discuss those wishes with family members, it can come as a surprise to the family. When someone dies, those left behind experience strong emotions, and that can make the decision even more difficult. That is what happens. Unfortunately, one in five families decides not to honour the deceased's wishes.

On Tuesday, my colleague opposite also introduced a bill to increase the number of donors. I support his bill. We need to talk about organ donation, and we really need to talk about it with our family members. That could reduce the number of families who say no.

● (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned driver's licences in his presentation. In Ontario, there used to be a system whereby an individual would check off a box on his or her licence indicating that they wish to be a donor. These licences need to be renewed and we have to keep reminding ourselves to check off the box.

Now we have the beadonor.ca website, where we are able to indicate one time only that we want to donate our organs. Is that something common across Canada or is it only in Ontario?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I very much appreciate his support for my motion.

What he is talking about is a best practice. Earlier, I mentioned Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, but other provinces have different practices. I will not go through all the provinces.

We can find out more about best practices for increasing the number of organ donors. Canada ranks in the bottom third of developed countries for life-saving organ donations. That is one practice, and it is one possible solution.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today in the House to speak in favour of Motion No. 189, regarding organ and tissue donation.

[*Translation*]

I would like to begin my speech by thanking the member for Thérèse-De Blainville for moving this motion and for his ongoing efforts on this file. I would also like to thank the member for Calgary Confederation for his years of work on this file and, more recently, for introducing Bill C-316.

I want to take this opportunity to draw attention to the most recent report of the Standing Committee on Health, entitled "Organ Donation in Canada". This unanimous report is the ideal example of how members from all parties can work together to improve Canadians' health. Organ donation is an impartial and non-partisan issue. I would like to thank all members of the Standing Committee on Health for their hard work. In particular, I want to thank the member for Calgary Confederation for raising this issue three years ago. Organ and tissue donation is a Canadian concern, and I hope we will not forget that as we continue this debate.

The Standing Committee on Health made several recommendations to the federal government in its recent report, including that the government provide Canadian Blood Services with greater funding in order to expand upon interprovincial programs and develop an awareness campaign. The committee also recommended that the Minister of Health establish a federal-provincial working group to examine best practices across the country and that the federal government consider the feasibility of a presumed consent system for organ donation.

[*English*]

Along those same lines, I would like to thank all the groups, organizations and Canadians who have reached out to the health committee and to other members of Parliament to highlight the importance of this issue. This is a national issue that needs be addressed. Being an organ donor can save up to as many as eight lives and can improve the quality of life for up to 75 people, without counting the family and loved ones of those awaiting treatment. Organ and tissue donation play a large role in the Canadian health care system and are truly life-changing. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all Canadians to visit BeADonor.ca and register.

With respect to statistics, more than 1,600 people are added to the organ donor wait-list each year. With respect to the demand on our health care system, over 75% of Canadians on the organ donor list are in need of a kidney transplant, 10% need a liver, 6% need lungs and 4% are waiting for a heart. This is a tremendous need. Considering only 1% of deaths in hospitals end up being organ donors, more needs to be done to increase the number of possible donors across the country.

When most people think of organ donation and of being an organ donor, most Canadians think of organ donation as happening after death. However, living organ donation is also an important part of our medical system. Living organ donation can include a kidney, part of the liver or a lobe of the lung. British Columbia and Alberta have the highest living donor rates in Canada, coming in at 20 living donors per million people. Often overlooked, I would encourage all Canadians to further inform themselves on becoming a living donor.

Another uniquely Canadian concern is the differences between provincial systems. Different registration systems, registration rates, medical practices and education frameworks make the Canadian organ donor system we have now extremely fragmented. Where one lives should not impact ones access to health care, but that is the reality in Canada. Whether it be palliative care, surgery wait times, prescription medication access or organ donation rates, the lack of consistency between our provinces leaves many Canadians without the care they need and without the opportunities other Canadians may have access to. Where people live should not have an effect on their quality of care.

Internationally, there are a number of models we could look to for best practices. Canada has what is called an opt-in system, meaning people do not become listed as organ donors until they register through their respective province. This has led to less than 25% of Canadians being registered as organ donors, which is a stark contrast to the figure of 90% of Canadians who are in favour of organ donation.

● (1740)

Another very popular organ donation system would be the opt-out model, wherein people are considered to be organ donors unless they officially opt out. As we can imagine, this leads to much higher donor rates, such as in Spain, which has an opt-out model. In less than a decade the country passed from having 15 donors per million to 40 donors per million, and had more than 4,600 organ transplants in 2016 alone. This is in comparison with the 21 per million donor rate and the 2,835 organ transplants in Canada in the same year.

This system has been brought up on numerous occasions. I have heard from many Canadians who believe that an opt-out model would lead to a drastic increase in organ donation figures. Today, in Ontario, there are over 1,500 people waiting for life-saving organs. Even more shocking is that every three days, someone in Ontario will die because they have not received an organ.

[*Translation*]

For example, Health Canada's website shows that in 2016, 4,500 Canadians were waiting for organ transplants, 2,800 organs were transplanted, and 260 people died waiting for a transplant. That means 260 lives were lost because of the shortage of organs in Canada. That is simply unacceptable.

[*English*]

However, simply having a national consensus is half the battle. Family refusal rates can be detrimental to organ donation numbers and, as such, I would encourage every family to have the conversation. Organ donation saves lives and being aware of a loved one's intention is of the utmost importance.

We have heard some discussion already about how important it is for family members to know of a loved one's choice to be an organ donor. They should have those conversations before the difficult time when a loved one has passed and the family is left to carry out that person's wishes. It is a good idea to do that. Sometimes people think they are too old to be donors, but that is not the case, because the oldest tissue donor was 102. It is never too late to become a donor. I believe the oldest organ donor was in his nineties, so it is certainly something people should consider and it is never too late to change their minds and get on the list.

When it comes to organ donor best practices, Ontario, B.C. and Quebec have some excellent practices, not just in making sure that organs can be used but in the technology they are using to do organ transplants. We can see how a tragedy like the one in Humboldt resulted in 16 deaths, but one of the people was an organ donor and was able to save eight lives. Not only that, but the attention that news of that got encouraged others to take the time to become an organ donor. If people are watching, I would encourage them to go online to beadonor.ca and sign up now. It does not take very long, but it could make a difference to someone's life.

Motion No. 189 is definitely in line with both my colleague's private member's bill, Bill C-316, as well as with all the testimony heard at committee. All of the parties have expressed their support for further improvements in this area and, as such, I will be supporting Motion No. 189. I would encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to do the same. I want to thank members on both sides for bringing this issue forward. I love to see examples of parliamentarians working together in a positive way for positive outcomes for Canadians.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to my colleague's motion on organ donation, a topic that has already been the subject of a bill and a study in committee. Although I support my colleague's motion, as I said in my question, I am disappointed that he decided not to support the bill introduced by the Conservative member for Edmonton Manning in February 2016 and that he moved a motion on the same topic. It would have been more productive to support the bill and send it to committee, where it could have been studied immediately.

I took a look at this bill and the committee's report, which is quite interesting, and I have to say that the state of our health care systems really could have been expanded further. There is a lot of talk about donations, people who do not sign their consent card and public awareness campaigns. This is all worthwhile, but it is hard to talk about organ donation without talking about what is going on in our health care systems, especially in Quebec. The federal government has some responsibility there, and it creates an additional burden when it shirks its responsibilities, especially with respect to health transfers to Quebec.

Organ donation is a very demanding and technically complicated procedure, particularly when the donor is brain dead. First, the potential donor is assigned two nurses, who must have intensive care training and know how to use specialized equipment. Because timelines are so tight, the deceased's vital functions must be maintained until the organ can be harvested and transplanted into the recipient's body. When the individual is brain dead, the body must be intubated and hooked up to a ventilator, and the heart must be stimulated to beat.

These procedures require a lot of equipment and specially trained staff. Unfortunately, nurses in our health care system are already overworked. They work 16-hour shifts on understaffed wards. Emergency rooms are often two or three nurses short, and nobody is brought in to replace them. People miss opportunities to identify organ donors because it does not occur to them in the moment. It is a complex process, and a particularly onerous one for rural regions.

If we really want to raise organ donation rates, we need to take a close look at the state of our health care systems. Nurses are vital to the organ donation process. Say a person is brought to the hospital after an accident. The person is brain dead. For a transplant to happen, there have to be nurses available who are not overwhelmed by their other duties. Discussing the options with family members takes a person who has the time to explain the process calmly. Nurses cannot manage that if they are always running around like chickens with their heads cut off.

There are a lot of health care system issues we need to consider. Unfortunately, that whole piece has been left out of the puzzle. I realize that the provinces are primarily responsible for setting up these systems, but when the federal government dissociates itself by cutting health transfers to the provinces, that is kind of hypocritical. If we want to raise organ donation rates, we need to make sure our emergency rooms are not swamped and our people are not exhausted. That is where we need to start.

● (1750)

Most cases of organ donation that were not decided when the donor was living, and therefore were not planned and occurred because of unfortunate accidents, are identified in emergency departments. They occur because of the alertness of emergency room staff. These workers realize right away that there is an opportunity, and they immediately inform a doctor that someone is a potential donor.

We must also understand that practices in the health field have changed a great deal over the years. Staff are much less quick to initiate resuscitation procedures. Families often ask for resuscitation to be stopped. In such cases, the person was never brain dead. Had they continued with resuscitation, the person would have become brain dead and could have been stabilized and become a potential donor.

There is also a danger when the person had a disability or attempted suicide, for example. The danger is that the resuscitation manoeuvres will be successful but will leave the person with impairments. Often, families would rather stop resuscitation than run the risk of keeping the person alive in a vegetative state. In cases where the prognosis is dismal, families often ask medical professionals to stop resuscitation, which is done much more quickly than before.

Before, medical professionals were required to do everything in their power to save a life. Now they stop resuscitation much sooner, which means that the person dies. Distance and the time it takes to move the body means that it is unrealistic to expect organs to reach recipients in rural regions on time. Often, the only way for them to receive an organ from a potential donor is to keep the donor's system functioning. The donor needs to be in stable condition. Their blood pressure, heart rate, respiration or ventilation and oxygen saturation levels must be maintained.

A potential donor cannot be moved unless they are in stable condition. Doctors have to be able to stabilize them, which takes a lot of resources. Such resources are sometimes hard to come by in the case of an accident that happens in the middle of the night. That is the reality of the health care system, and I would like that to be taken into account when we talk about organ donation. We talk a lot about the people who have not signed an organ donor card, but we also need to carefully consider the reality of our health care system. I think we need to take that into account and understand that the provinces are doing their best with their health care systems. However, we are currently dealing with a major crisis.

We need only think of the overtime that nurses are required to do. That is a total disaster. Every day nurses are forced to remain at work even though they are exhausted and do not feel they can work or think. They are forced to work for 16 hours straight. Then we wonder why they do not have the clinical reflex to initiate the organ donation process when they are completely exhausted and the health care system is broken. The federal government pretends not to be aware of this; it is backing away from health transfers, claiming that the provinces alone are responsible for what happens in hospitals, that it is not its jurisdiction.

If women are forced to stay at work, if they cannot go pick up their kids, if they leave work in tears, or decide to change careers because they are completely exhausted, I think we have a problem. I sincerely hope that we also consider what is going on in our hospitals to try to fix our public health problems, which can be serious for many people. Some people might not look at our health care situation with blinders on, like they do now.

I urge people to step up and pay attention to the crisis in our hospitals.

● (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Motion No. 189 in support of organ donation.

Often the expression "life and death" is used metaphorically when the stakes are high. However, the subject of today's motion is truly a matter of life and death. Organ donation is a modern miracle of medical science. It has saved and continues to save thousands of lives.

Winston Churchill once said. "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Guelphites are choosing to give the gift of life. According to recent data, 41% of Guelphites are registered organ donors, which compares to Ontario's average of 33%. Of 119,293 health card holders, Guelph has 48,820 registered donors. Becoming a donor is as easy as a trip to beadonor.ca with one's health card in hand. It only takes a few minutes to register to become a donor and from there on in, the fact that one is a donor appears on the back of one's next health card.

While modern medicine provides us with the tools to save lives, we lack an effective way to inform Canadians about the necessity of donations. The lack of awareness and education has led to some truly shocking numbers. In 2016, for example, over 4,500 people were waiting for organ transplants across Canada. While 2,906 of those lives were saved through transplant, 256 of those people on the list died waiting. In any given year, on average, one person will die every three days waiting for an organ that did not come in time to save their life. These deaths are preventable and truly tragic.

While Canada usually ranks in the top third of countries for donations, supply is hindered by myths and misconceptions about organ donation, as has been mentioned in the House tonight. About 90% of Canadians support organ donation, but only 20% have given their consent to be donors. Some believe they are too old to be organ donors even though their age is not an issue. In addition, 10% to 15% of the time, families chose not to donate at the time of death simply because they were not aware of their relative's intentions. Unfortunately, organ failure can happen to anyone. We all have organs and they can fail for a variety of reasons. We never know who will need an organ or when.

As a regular blood donor myself and an organ donor, I understand how difficult it is for blood banks to keep up with demand. Half of all Canadians are fit to donate blood, but only one in 60 Canadians gave blood last year. It takes many blood donors to help save a hospital patient. It can take up to five donors to save someone who needs heart surgery, 50 donors to help save just one person seriously hurt in a car crash and eight donors a week to help someone going through treatment for leukemia. The fact is, doctors need a supply of blood and organs in order to do their critical work in saving lives.

As the motion states, government can make a difference through public education and awareness campaigns, as well as through ongoing communication. For example, those Canadians who have considered donation often consent to donate their organs after death. However, what most people do not realize is that it is also possible to donate organs while you are still alive. Living donors who are at the age of majority and in good health can donate a kidney, a part of a liver or a lobe of a lung. Even a portion of a lung or a liver can grow into a complete and fully functioning organ, given modern science.

Since 2013, Canada's rates of donations among living donors have decreased. Guelph City Councillor Phil Allt recently became a local hero by donating one of his kidneys to save his brother's life. Phil has gone on to continue his service as a city councillor and his brother has a new lease on life. There has been some other promising news. In the past 10 years, the number of people consenting to donate their organs post-mortem has gone up by 42%. As Canada's population continues to rise and age, we need organ donation to keep pace with our changing demographics.

● (1800)

It is time for a comprehensive plan for organ donation. This would not only educate Canadians about the current scope of the challenge but would show them how they as individuals can help to solve it.

By registering consent to donate, we have the potential to save as many as eight lives and improve the quality of life for up to 75 people, and most of all give countless families more treasured moments with those who need help.

Another one of my constituents, Janet Parr, received a donor heart six years ago. The moments that her donor has given her are plentiful. However, two stick out in her mind: being alive to see her daughter reach milestones, such as getting her driver's licence, graduating high school and college, getting her first job as an adult; and being at the bedside of her brother, who underwent a successful heart transplant just four months after her own. Her donor is her hero.

Mike Willis also received a donor heart in the summer of 2015. Since then, with a new heart, Mike and his wife Linda have become local champions in Guelph, setting up a sign-up booth at the Guelph Farmers' Market, working with the local Lions Club, raising the beadonor.ca flag at city hall and promoting beadonor.ca on social media. Guelph has had 3,097 new registrations in the past year due to their efforts and the tremendous community response. Even still, Guelph still has 68,000 more potential donors. Better is always possible.

Before I finish, I would like to extend my gratitude to the member for Thérèse-De Blainville for putting this important motion forward for debate. We can all do more to save lives, both as individuals and as communities working together, whether through blood or organ donation. The Government of Canada can play a key role in identifying options for improved collaboration, increased organ donation and transplant rates, and outcomes across Canada. It is only by working together that we will continue to improve the organ and tissue donation and transplant system, and ensure that Canadians have timely and effective access to care.

We need to build on the local stories. We need to see Canadians helping each other to live more rich and fulfilling lives, knowing they will be covered off by other Canadians willing to share their life before and after death.

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion No. 189, which seeks to improve the organ and tissue donation system here in Canada.

This is a very timely issue for debate in the House, in a week that has seen the tabling of the health committee's report on organ donation, the second reading of my private member's bill on organ donation, and now Motion No. 189 on organ donation. It has truly been an organ donation week here in the House.

Like the hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville, I am a long-time advocate of organ and tissue donation in Canada. I have heard many triumphant and also tragic stories related to organ and tissue donation.

As a former MLA, I had a bill pass in the Alberta legislature that resulted in the creation of the Alberta organ and tissue donation registry.

However, more work needs to be done to get Canadians on board, so I introduced another bill just this week here in the House of Commons. That bill proposes to amend the annual income tax return to ask Canadians if they wish to become organ and tissue donors. It has the potential to register millions more donors.

Over 90% of Canadians support organ and tissue donation, but just over 20% of Canadians are registered. We need to do better. We can do better.

I am honoured to have the member for Thérèse-De Blainville as an official seconder of my bill, and I certainly will be supporting his initiative here with Motion No. 189.

Also, on Tuesday of this week, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health presented an important report regarding organ and tissue donation. The report is an accumulation of the work we did together after I proposed a study at committee.

I must note that the committee did an amazing job of working together toward a common goal. I must thank all hon. committee members for allowing this study to happen. This non-partisan effort, along with the tremendous expert testimony that we received, made the report a fair and accurate representation of the study we undertook.

I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the key items from the report, as they speak directly in support of Motion No. 189.

We found that the federal government could help by first, supporting the adoption of best practices in organ donation and transplantation across all jurisdictions; second, investing in national public education and awareness campaigns to promote a conversation among family members regarding organ donation; third, creating more opportunities for Canadians to register their decisions regarding organ donation; and fourth, providing sustained funding for research and data collection to ensure that organ transplantation results in improved health outcomes for Canadians.

The health committee quickly agreed on a number of key recommendations after listening to these key stakeholders and experts.

The first recommendation from the health committee is that the Government of Canada provide the Canadian Blood Services with sustained funding to strengthen and expand upon existing inter-provincial organ donation and transplantation-sharing programs; develop a sustained national multimedia public awareness campaign to promote organ donation, and promote the adoption of best practices in organ donation and transplantation across the country.

The second recommendation is that the health minister establish a working group with provincial and territorial ministers of health to examine best practices in organ donation legislation across the country, such as the adoption of mandatory referral of any potential organ donor, and to identify any barriers to the implementation of these best practices.

Our third recommendation is that the Government of Canada identify and create opportunities for Canadians to register as organ donors through access points for federal programs and services, in collaboration with provincial and territorial organ donation programs. Of course, I have to note that this particular recommendation directly supports my Bill C-316 and my efforts to amend the annual tax return so that Canadians can register as donors.

● (1805)

The fourth recommendation of our health committee is that the Government of Canada provide information and education to Canadians regarding organ donation as part of its efforts to promote organ donation registration through federal programs and service access points.

Our fifth recommendation is that the Government of Canada continue to provide funding for organ donation and transplantation research through its networks of centres of excellence program.

Finally, the sixth is that the Canadian Institute for Health Information and Canadian Blood Services work together to develop a national data collection system to monitor outcomes in organ donation to support research and systems improvement.

Improving the transplant system in Canada is not a political issue; it is a human issue. I believe we have a united House when it comes to dealing with this issue of organ donation, and I firmly believe that we can improve the system. We have the potential to save hundreds of lives and improve the quality of the lives of many Canadians in every community of this great country. Inaction or delays in making necessary improvements will cost lives and money. It is a known fact that life-saving transplants save us costs in our our medical system because they remove the dependence of thousands of people from costly treatments and hospitalizations. This leaves more resources for other challenges to be addressed.

I recognize that in Canada, because organ and tissue donor registries are a provincial jurisdiction, we face some unique challenges in implementing change. That said, I also believe that where there is a will there is a way. I believe that Canada can move from being a country with one of the worst organ-donation rates in the world to one of the best. I believe that Canadians will register in greater numbers if we make the process easier and more convenient. I believe we need to be innovative in how we reach potential donors and how we educate and inform potential donors. I also believe that we need to do a great deal more work to make sure that families respect the wishes of their family members. The number of people who want to donate but have that decision overruled by their surviving families is shocking. One study suggests that one in five donors does not have his or her relatives respect his or her wishes to donate. We need to open up the discussion in Canada so that we do not bury perfectly good organs every day while other people in our community face death daily, waiting for a life-saving transplant.

In closing, I would again like to thank my colleagues from all parties for their support on this issue that is so close to my heart. I want to thank them for their non-partisan and collaborative support to improve the lives of so many Canadians. I believe we can achieve some great things here if we all continue to pull in the same direction. For this reason, I am proud to be a strong supporter of Motion No. 189.

● (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first off, I applaud my colleague and friend for bringing to the House a fantastic issue that really touches all Canadians. I suspect it would not take much for us to go into someone's home and after a short discussion find out there is someone in that home who knows of someone with a personal story regarding organ donation.

It truly is one of those issues, as has been pointed out by previous speakers and others, that supersedes political partisanship. We often see healthy debates when motions of this nature come forward. At times it can be very challenging depending on the content. For example, members from the New Democratic Party made reference to a private member's bill. At times, maybe the debate does not go the way in which everyone would like to ideally see it go, but what is important is that we have the debate.

My colleague, no doubt with the support of many others, has brought forward a resolution worthy of an ongoing debate. Hopefully, we will see more action, not just action coming from Ottawa, but from a number of different stakeholders. One of the positive attributes about the motion my friend has brought forward is it approaches the matter by saying that we need to see strong national leadership, but recognizing just how important it is that other stakeholders be involved and engaged in that process.

For a number of years I was the health care critic in the province of Manitoba. In that capacity, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of people. One individual, who has since passed, needed a transplant.

We all understand the importance of transplants. We all understand that the public as a whole would like to see us do more, and that is the way in which I interpret this motion we are debating today, a motion that would ultimately be for the betterment of all of Canada and which really encourages Ottawa to work with the different stakeholders in order to advance a wonderful idea.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the time has run out, so I will end my comments there.

The Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

● (1815)

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Essex is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, when the government nationalized the Trans Mountain pipeline in May, I asked whether the new Crown corporation would honour the existing contract to buy 75% of the steel from EVRAZ in Regina and make every effort to source the remaining 25% of steel from other Canadian mills. I welcome the opportunity this evening to further elaborate the case for using Canadian-made steel in the Trans Mountain expansion project.

At the outset, I should state that Kinder Morgan decided, on purely commercial grounds, to buy most of the steel pipe from EVRAZ in Regina. What I would like to speak to are some additional reasons to give preference to Canadian-made steel now that the project is under public ownership, and I would like to address three topics. The first is jobs. The second is the environment. The third is trade.

The main argument advanced in favour of the Trans Mountain expansion is that the project will create jobs for Canadians. Of course the extent to which it creates jobs depends critically on where the materials are sourced. Importing steel pipe from offshore obviously does not create jobs in Canada, whereas buying the steel from Canadian suppliers clearly does create jobs and economic activity in our country.

The EVRAZ steel plant has the potential to be the largest private sector employer in Regina. It is a pillar of the local economy and would make a very important contribution to employment in our city. Certainly the order to make pipe for Trans Mountain is the largest order that facility has and is really keeping it going.

I also want to talk about the environment, because that is often invoked as the main argument against this project. It is important to note that one of the key advantages to using Canadian-made steel is that it has a much lower carbon content than steel imported from offshore. Manufacturing a tonne of steel in China and shipping it here emits about five times as much carbon as manufacturing it at EVRAZ in Regina. Therefore, if our concern is to reduce carbon emissions, one of the solutions is to manufacture the steel right here in Canada.

Another environmental concern has to do with the possibility of spills. A key advantage of Canadian-made steel is that we have the opportunity to rigorously inspect it throughout the manufacturing process, whereas with imported steel, we sometimes cannot be as sure exactly what we are getting.

Therefore, from an environmental perspective, there is a strong argument to manufacture the pipe and other materials for the Trans Mountain expansion in Canada.

The final thing I want to talk about is trade. Some would suggest that despite these advantages of using Canadian-made steel, we need to honour free trade obligations. What I would emphasize is that other countries, such as the United States, already have policies in place to favour domestic suppliers with their federal procurement. We think of the famous buy-American provisions.

All I am saying is that now that the project is being carried out by the federal government, it makes sense to apply the same sorts of provisions in Canada to give preference to Canadian-made steel and the case for doing so is particularly strong in the face of American tariffs currently applied to Canadian steel. If we cannot sell south of the border, all the more reason to use the steel here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I think he does a very good job of defending the interests of his part of the country when it comes to steel producers.

There is no doubt that we on this side of the House are committed to defending our steel and aluminum producers from coast to coast to coast in Canada. We saw that when the U.S. imposed totally unacceptable tariffs. We imposed countervailing measures to be sure to protect our industries.

This summer, in light of the unacceptable tariffs that were illegally imposed by the U.S., we also set up a $2-billion fund to help the steel and aluminum industries, as well as related industries.

On this side of the House, the hon. member will always find a government that stands with our steel and aluminum producers, including those in Quebec, and the industries that depend on them, like the one he was referring to.

In his speech, he mentioned three important aspects regarding the Trans Mountain expansion, namely the environment, international trade, and jobs. Trade is precisely why the government intervened. It wanted to open new markets for Canadian resources outside the United States.

As we know, 10, 12 or 15 years ago, 99% of our oil and gas resources were being exported to the United States. Today, 99% of our resources are still being exported to the United States, on account of a lack of international markets and shipping capabilities. This is taking a toll on the Canadian economy, costing us billions of dollars every year. It also means that jobs are not being created.

That is why the Canadian government decided to invest in the Trans Mountain expansion. We see it as is a forward-looking project. The government wants to make sure we get a fair price for our resources, to help pay for our transition to a greener economy and the creation of greener jobs.

That is also why we introduced measures like the $1.5-billion oceans protection plan, and why are are putting a price on pollution. We believe that we need to protect the environment while also growing the economy. The two must go hand in hand. Canada's economic vitality, and its long-term vitality in general, depend on it when it comes to protecting our natural environments.

● (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has certainly spoken quite eloquently about the Trans Mountain expansion project. What he has not done, and what I and people in Regina are looking for, is to see a clearer commitment to honour the existing contract to procure most of the steel for the project from the EVRAZ mill. I think the sense is that the project would continue on that basis, but it would be nice to hear the government give a clear yes to that question. I hope it will come during the parliamentary secretary's final minute.

Similarly, I would hope that the government would provide some sort of commitment and some kind of indication as to how it intends to ensure that the remaining 25% of the steel in the Trans Mountain expansion will be procured as much as possible from Canadian steel mills.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my colleague for his intervention. He is doing a great job defending the interests of his region and its industries.

As I told him in my first response, on this side of the House, he will always find a government that stands with Canadian steel producers. We have proven this repeatedly over the past few months when dealing with the illegal tariffs imposed by the U.S. We set up a $2-billion fund to help steel and aluminum producers, as well as other industries that depend on those sectors.

I am sure he will find that our government is always listening and willing to be proactive to defend and protect our steel producers and ensure their prosperity in the short, medium and long terms.

* * *

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, on April 27, I rose in the House to convey the concerns B.C. coastal communities had about the foregone conclusion made by the government on the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline.

The former parliamentary secretary to the minister of natural resources said that the review "was the most exhaustive in the history of pipelines in Canada" and that the "additional steps...made the process more rigorous." One of the problems I have with this government is that its representatives can keep standing in this place and make such preposterous claims.

First, the ministerial review panel in question admitted that it lacked the time, the technical expertise and the resources to fill the gaps in the National Energy Board process. It ended up with little more than questions that remained unanswered. It kept no public records of hearings, admitted that the meetings were hastily organized and confirmed that it had a serious lack of public confidence in the National Energy Board and its recommendations. I attended one of those meetings when it came to Victoria in 2016, so I witnessed how bad it was first-hand.

Next, we have the internal memo from the office of the former natural resources minister, which described the negotiations with first nations as "paternalistic", "unrealistic" and "inadequate". We now have evidence that the government had made up its mind to allow Texas-based Kinder Morgan to build a major pipeline and that it regarded consultations with first nations as simply an item to check off a grocery list.

The government maintains that it fulfilled its legal duty to consult first nations about the project before it announced that it was approving the pipeline on Nov. 29, 2016. However, it has been revealed that at a meeting in late October 2016, a group of about two dozen senior staff were invited to Vancouver and were told by a senior government official at that meeting that their job was to find a way to get the pipeline approved.

The NDP, and our leader Jagmeet Singh, have repeatedly told the Liberal government that its consultation process for the Trans Mountain pipeline was completely inadequate and destined for failure. Unfortunately, our enquiries were repeatedly met with the same old Liberal arrogance. However, we found vindication last month as the unanimous Federal Court of Appeal ruling on Trans Mountain found that the National Energy Board's review of the project was so flawed that the federal government could not rely on it as a basis for its decision to approve the expansion. The court also concluded that the federal government failed in its duty to engage in meaningful consultations with first nations before giving the green light to the project. In their consultations with indigenous communities, the government's representatives limited their mandate to listening to and recording the concerns of the indigenous applicants and then simply transmitting those concerns to decision-makers. There was no meaningful two-way dialogue.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly stated that no relationship is more important than that with indigenous people, but the government's approval process for Trans Mountain exposed a calculated and predetermined strategy to get to a yes decision on this project.

Indigenous people are entitled to a dialogue that demonstrates that the government gives serious consideration to the specific and very real concerns they have. Is the parliamentary secretary prepared to still say that this project is going to be built in spite of these concerns?

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for bringing his question to the House today. We know that he shares his concerns in all sincerity and, in my view, makes very important points.

As many members before me have said, no direction was given to federal representatives to justify expanding the Trans Mountain network. No direction was given, period.

In fact, the reality is quite different. Our government insisted that the federal review of the TMX project include broad public consultations and engagement sessions with indigenous peoples. All these sessions and consultations were held in good faith. These principles are at the heart of a healthy democracy. Processes are more effective and decisions are sounder when every voice is heard. That is why our government engaged in the entire review process of the Trans Mountain expansion project.

However, as the hon. member pointed out, we know that the Federal Court ruled that although there have been significant improvements in the way major natural resources projects are reviewed, there remain two areas where these efforts still need to be improved.

[*English*]

First, the National Energy Board should have included the potential impact of marine shipping as part of its review of the TMX project. Second, the Crown failed to adequately discharge its duty to consult with indigenous people. I think it is worth reading what Justice Eleanor Dawson stated in her written decision with respect to both of these issues.

On the first one, the judge said, "I conclude that most of the flaws asserted against the NEB's process and findings are without merit."

The justice continued, "However, the Board made one critical error. The Board unjustifiably defined the scope of the Project under review not to include Project-related tanker traffic."

On indigenous engagement, she added, "I also conclude that Canada acted in good faith and selected an appropriate consultation framework."

We acted in good faith. Where we fell down in our duty to consult was in the stage of engagement known as phase III.

Our government has heard what the court said. We are listening and we are taking action to ensure that we move forward in the right way. That is why the Minister of Natural Resources has announced the first step of our planned response by instructing the NEB to revisit its recommendation on the TMX expansion to take into account the impact of the project's increased marine transportation.

I would also draw the attention of the House to yesterday's decision by the NEB to appoint the panel for this review. We are hoping that the NEB will move efficiently.

The minister has also indicated that additional steps will be announced. I would urge the member opposite to be patient and to wait for those details.

● (1830)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's response. The fact of the matter is that the government, the taxpayers of Canada, are now owners of the $4.5-billion pipeline. The government has repeatedly stated that it wants to get the project built and I think that puts the Government of Canada in an inherent conflict of interest in the negotiations with first nations.

The Liberals have yet to credibly explain where all of the international buyers for our increased bitumen exports are lining up. They have yet to credibly state how this project is in any way going to aid our country in meeting its climate change goals. We are in 2018 and climate change is arguably the issue of the 21st century. It is shameful that we are letting down a young generation that is going to take this country and one day lead it through some of the biggest challenges. We are not setting them up for success and I just hope that the government reconsiders that fact in the negotiations that go forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comment. It was not so much a question as it was a comment.

I completely agree with him. I am a millennial, and I would say that climate change and environmental protections are the most pressing concerns facing all societies and governments.

However, I will tell him that our government has an ambitious plan to combat climate change. For example, we put a price on pollution, which should have been done a long time ago. The government is proposing that pollution have a price in Canada. We also invested $182 billion over 12 years in infrastructure to fund public transportation, for example, and ensure that we are less dependent on today's vehicles and have access to good public transportation across the country. This is part of our plan to protect the environment and combat climate change.

The Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:33 p.m.)

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